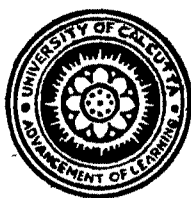


Vol. VIII : Nos. 1-2

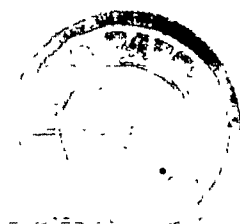
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AMALES TRIPATHI



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Vol. VIII, Nos. 1-2

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CONTENTS

905
C 126

41/8

Articles

The Role of Traditional Modernizers :
Bengal's Experience in the 19th
Century

AMALESH TRIPATHI

Page ... 1

●
Rabindranath Tagore and
The Nineteenth Century Renaissance

UMA DASGUPTA

Page ... 17

●
Medieval Indian Society,
State and Social Custom

SUSHIL CHOUDHURY

Page ... 38

●
Establishment of the French in Bengal :
Early years, 1674-1693

ANIRUDDHA RAY

Page ... 61

●
A Reward that was not : An Assessment of the
Anglo-Nizam Treaty of 1860

BHARATI RAY

Page ... 94



JCU200

P, 5872

THE ROLE OF TRADITIONAL MODERNIZERS : BENGAL'S EXPERIENCE IN THE 19th CENTURY*

AMALES TRIPATHI

The muse of History, being a woman, has the engaging habit of discarding old fashions every few years. The conceptual framework of tradition and modernity has been contending with that of continuity and change for some time, and may well be giving way. I am content, however, with it, even at the cost of being called old-fashioned, because it is still a viable concept in a country, dominated by alien rule and colonial economy, like India. Development of Bengali (or Indian) ideas may be viewed from the perspective of continuity and change, but we must enquire into the character of what has continued and what has changed as also into the extent of continuity and change. Since these inquiries invariable lead to the matrix of Indian culture and impact of western seed, we are brought back to the assessment of inherited tradition and imported impulse towards modernization.

In this paper 'tradition' has been defined as a set of devices that have proven their ability to order the experience of a given society. It is socially grounded and helps in responding to challenges from without, especially spiritual—cultural challenges. Change is possible within a tradition in so far as its elements are able to expand their implications to deal with new experiences while not losing their identity. It may, however, fail to control the challenge if it comes from a higher culture, when a political upheaval replaces the old elite which bears the tradition, and when dynamism within it dries up, making it too rigid to assimilate or too malleable to maintain identity. In the case of any great culture facing challenge, a crisis, a search for an alternative paradigm and a frantic effort to adapt tradition are noticeable.

* Revised version of paper presented at 31st session of International Congress of Human Sciences in Asia and North Africa, Tokyo-Kyoto, 1983.

A thorough discussion of the meaning or meanings of modernization at Hakone Conference (1960) helped me to formulate my own views. Ouchi rightly objected to Almond's and Coleman's nine point description of the essential features of modernization as synonymous with features of Western capitalism. These have surprising similarity with Rostow's last three stages of economic growth. Nakano Takahasi's reduced list of seven contains only one new feature—viz. growth of nation-states and international relations. As a whole Kato compared the two lists to a syndrome of several symptoms whose relationship indicated one disease. By using a Weberian concept, Schwartz diagnosed it as rationality. It did not imply economic rationalization only but a systematic and sustained application of man's energy to the rational control of his total physical and social environment. In his eagerness to be objective, Schwartz ignored values altogether, and Maruyama was quick to spot it. Stephen Hay's definition of modernization as change to a more recent form and improvement—begs the question. What kind of form? What improvement? This—worldly improvement may not prove wholly satisfactory, and emotion often plays as important a role as reason in solving psychological crises. Edward Shils attaches importance to a spirit of creativity. But in what way was the classical Greece or medieval France less creative than modern America?¹

As for explanation of such social change, the Marxists would suggest class tension, Weberians—changing values, and others—advance in technology. Infact, there is no unitary explanation. Secondly, modernization in one field, like politics, may co-exist with, and even be furthered by, revivalism in another, like religion or culture. Similarly, economic modernization may result in political authoritarianism.

Reischauer's comparative search for patterns and types puts the Indian case in category 2, where major elements of modernization were introduced from the outside into an area with a highly distinctive civilization of its own. Two factors and their interactions are relevant—tradition or the inherited matrix and modernity or the imported impulse that had evolved in a different historical context. To quote Sansom on Japan, "the hand that opened the door was as

important as the one that produced the knock from outside". To put it in another way, the Indian *Yin* was as important as the Western *Yang*.

(2)

New what about "the base line" from which the process was supposed to have started ? How far was India economically, politically and culturally prepared to receive it ? I have in mind modern researches into the receptivity of the Tokugawa period, especially the role of Confucianism in shaping—helping or distorting—the process of modernization. A few quotes from the latest findings, incorporated in the *Cambridge Economic History of India*, will prove the hollowness of the claims put forward by some Marxist historians about the potentialities in the Mughal economy, aborted by the British conquest. One of the protagonists of the thesis, T. C. Raichaudhuri, has amply made amends for his impetuous comparison of pre-British India with Tokugawa Japan in a debate with Morris D. Morris in the early sixties.² My *Trade and Finance in the Bengal Presidency 1793-1833*, anticipated many of Morris's arguments which he has reiterated in the second volume of the *Cambridge Economic History of India*. After indicating features of increasing commercialization in agriculture, Raichaudhuri now admits, "yet farming technology was remarkably backward and stagnant, not only as compared to that of the agricultural revolution in Europe or of Tokugawa Japan, but also in relation to mainland China." "Backward technique was no doubt often the result of the great poverty of the agricultural masses", which made them dependent on traders and money-lenders. The poverty was caused by the high pitch of Mughal revenue assessment, "50% of or more compared to China's 5 to 6 per cent." The same was true of the industrial scene. Not total stagnation but a relatively stagnant demand, low levels of capital formation, inadequacy of economic incentives to producers and a general indifference to labour-saving devices have been noted. India failed to produce cast iron and glassware, to use coal, to imitate European clocks, to introduce compass and telescope. "While it is reasonably certain that Mughal peace and the trade of the European companies led to an expansion of the domestic and

overseas markets, the rural sector of the Indian economy remained by and large a source of supply rather than a market for products—a serious limit on the overall size of the domestic market.” The primitive transport, the internal tolls, the continuity of emphasis on luxury articles, all prevented a chain reaction of overseas trade growth on other sectors of economy. Alterations in organization, rather than in technique, of production served to meet the augmented demand. Not only the poverty and the lack of mobility of the producer but also his hereditary, highly specialized, skill inhibited shift to a labour-saving technology. “Unlike early modern Europe, Mughal India had no aristocrat or high cleric owning units of production. The artisan acquiring wealth and emerging as a capitalist was rare and atypical.” The dominant values of the ruling class favoured conspicuous consumption rather than productive investment and were allergic to “curiosity about things mechanical.” “There is little to support the thesis that we have here the anticipations of an industrial revolution, later frustrated by colonial rule.” Without reading history backwards from the success of the Meiji era, the mid-eighteenth century India, concedes Ray Chaudhuri, “lacked many of the positive tendencies evident in the economy of contemporary Japan.”³ Very recently C. A. Bayly has rephrased Max Weber’s question: “If demand in the Indian economy had been raised (as it was, for instance, in Tokugawa Japan), would Indian commercial institutions have been able to infuse Indian society as a whole with capitalist values ?” In his view, at least, the answer is ‘no’, as the decisions of the Indian entrepreneurs in the pre-industrial period were made in the context of caste and religion ⁴

Yet, the assumption that British rule was bringing about a slow but sure modernization on bourgeois lines has come under rough weather. Even though the nationalist ‘drain theory’ contains some crude elements, there can be no denying the fact that loans floated for wars were mostly unproductive and those for railways were uneconomical. Purchase of Indian stores might have been more beneficial to Indian manufacturers as Indianisation of services to the middle classes. A protectionist fiscal policy during the E.I. Company’s rule and free trade imperialism during the Raj accelerated the decline of indigenous industries, though ‘de-industrialization’ may be too harsh a description of the process.⁵ The mani-

pulation of the rupee-sterling ratio in the British interest was always suspect in the Indian eyes.⁶ The Indian exchequer was made to bear an inequitably large share of the burden of imperial defence. Indigenous merchant-or money-lending capital was forced to play a subordinate role to British capital, represented by the agency houses, who also dominated shipping, foreign trade and export-oriented industries—indigo in the early stages and jute and tea, later. They controlled the Indian money-market, often with Government loans, and had a stranglehold on credit organizations and insurance business. Large areas of agriculture, we have already referred to indigo, tea and jute, were under their control.⁷ No doubt these activities resulted in commercialization of agriculture but they did not help the emergence of capitalist farming. In fact, foreign capitalist penetration helped consolidate the already established structure of landlord—money-lender exploitation which was further worsened by fluctuating world prices of Indian primary produce. The British policy of choosing Permanent Settlement in Bengal as the basic institution for collection of revenue and at the same time continuing small peasant subsistence economy was self-contradictory. The bureaucracy had an interest in keeping substantial ryots and the new middle class, whose one sure investment was land, on its side with minimum encroachment on the rights of the old zamindars. Differentiation among the peasantry took place, but the rich peasant would not take any risk in productive farming. He preferred trade, usury and sub-letting, which the Governments' inadvertent rent laws allowed throughout the 19th century. Rural indebtedness was rampant among the poor peasants, making exploitation more blatant and converting patron-client relationship to a labour agreement based on debt. All this kept productivity and income low and precluded emergence of home demand, in spite of rise in population. Some of the basic pre-conditions of modernization were negated by the colonial relationship between India and Britain. Only a few typical enclaves of colonial consolidation emerged without any dynamics of capitalist development. 'The white collective monopoly' was especially evident in eastern India. Neither contract nor competition existed in the true sense of the term. A system of simulation pervaded the whole atmosphere and reflected the situation in a distorted manner.

(3)

If the economic pre-conditions of a successful adoption of modernism were wanting, the social, religious, and cultural scene was not encouraging either. The Hindu world-view had been stagnant since the 17th century when the Vaishnava movement lost course in the sands of the Nyaya—Smriti culture of the traditional elite. Collections replaced creative writing, catechism, philosophical analysis. The Muslim world-view was cut off from its Perso-Arabic source with the fall of West Asian empires a century later.⁸ The typical literary expression of the 18th century Bengal, which has been praised by C. A. Bayly as a new type of State evolving out of the ruins of the Mughals, was the courtly and erotic poems of Bharatchandra which paid lip-service to the medieval Bhakti tradition. Where the Vaishnava poets had brought God down from heaven to play with man the eternal game of mystic love or the author of the Mangala Kavyas emphasized His transcendent, if whimsical, power, Bharatchandra made fun of gods on whom man could hardly rely in the uncertain, speculative world of British conquistadors and Indian compradors. While he hid the pangs of *anomie* under the firework of ironic ambiguity, ribald wit and jingling rhyme, his contemporary poet, Ramprasad, who inherited the Sakta tradition, poured heart-rending songs on the little man's poverty and helplessness into the deaf ears of the Divine Mother. The ribaldry of one, like the sadness of the other, underscored the same predicament—viz. confrontation with an alien and over-powering challenge. The succession states of the Mughal empire were not crashing before the onslaught of the barbarians but succumbing to the bearers of a vigorous, capitalist and scientific culture.

The Sanskrit tradition had long lost its creative power. The Vedic studies were almost unknown east of Varanasi, according to the evidence of William Ward, William Adam and Montgomery Martin.⁹ No commentary on the Vedanta has come out since that of Baladeva Vidyabhusan of the 18th century, and he was from Orissa. Students preferred literature, law and logic courses that had become entirely irrelevant. Half-baked pundits could not defend their ancestral religion at the bar Christianity or radical philosophy. While serious Orientalist researches were going on at the Asiatic

Society or at Fort William College (in Calcutta), Nadia, the classic centre of Sanskrit education since the 15th century, languished with 31 tols and 747 scholars. Learning had become scarce even among the Brahmins, commented Reverend W. J. Deer in 1829. Those who represented Hinduism spoke with a babel of tongues, according to the tenets of their sects and castes, and worshipped a variety of gods, according to their aesthetic and spiritual levels. H. H. Wilson found as many as 43 principal sects in 1846 ; Akshoy Kumar Datta more than 106 in 1870's. Most of them had been based on post-Vedic Puranas, Smritis and Tantras, though sectarian practices and regional variations caused great deviation from their original forms.

The 18th century environment of universalism and tolerance had helped the early conquerors to find unity amidst such bewildering diversity. Dow saw symbolism in pluralities and Wilkinson read in Gita the message of the unity of Godhead. But by 1780's enlightenment was giving way to evangelicalism. Harsh and ignorant commentaries of the missionaries stirred influential opinion in England and ultimately inspired James Mill to make a wholesale and scurrilous attack on Hinduism in the name of history.

While the traditional scholars at the top had become, to quote Fukuzawa's caustic remark on the Confucianists, "rice consuming dictionaries", the state of popular education was sadly remiss. William Adam in his Report of 1835 counts a lakh of schools in about a lakh and half of Bengal and Bihar villages, but, though excellent examples of village self-sufficiency and village level cooperation among classes and masses, these offered education by antique standards. Good enough for the zamindar's sherista or village level land/trade transactions, they were incapable of preparing men for new skills and opportunities, held out even by a colonial economy. The leadership of Christian missionaries resulted in 134 boys' and girls' schools with about 8000 pupils by 1833. The halting efforts of Calcutta School Society, David Hare's charity and Bentinck's private gifts added a few more to their number. But the filtration theory of the Anglicists discouraged further expansion. The Hardinge experiment with vernacular schools (1844) failed within four years. As for female education, domestic instruction by

Vaishnavis or *guru mashai* catered for the aristocrats, and missionary initiative amongst other classes was hampered by proselytization. Its flame was kept dimly burning by Bethune's generosity, Dalhousie's patronage and Vidyasagar's able management. If R.P. Dove is right, Tokugawa Japan was far better prepared to receive technological, economic and political changes than mid — 19th century Bengal.

(4)

Be it said to the credit of the Bengali intellectuals, they soon realized that economic modernization could only be partial, and unalloyed tradition could never serve the purpose of modernization. Few of them, again, equated modernization with westernization. But we should not miss in their responses a lot of difference about which elements of modernism were to be given priority and which elements of tradition could help the purpose of modernization. Rammohun Roy, for example, gave priority to monotheism, Christian ethics, and scientific education. Dwarkanath Tagore was primarily concerned with the introduction of capitalist economy, the necessity of which Rammohun also saw. The Derozians emphasized free thinking individualism, almost shading into scepticism or atheism, and a sort of political radicalism, borrowed from the climate of French Revolution. Vidyasagar opted for secularism, social reformism and vernacular education. Bankimchandra would graft humanism, positivism and scientific education on to the stock of the Hindu heritage. Vivekananda wanted something similar, although he would define that heritage in more universal and spiritual terms and utilise the synthesis in the service of the masses. Each welcomed rationalism as the greatest import from the West and none faltered from testing tradition, even religions tradition, against the touchstone of reason and practical utility.

Let us begin with Rammohun, who was in many ways to set the pace for the century. He rejected the evangelical's call for conversion to Christianity as the first step in modernity, and chose, instead, the Upanishadic tradition of a universal, rational, unitarian theism. He found for it sanction not only in the Vedas, regarded as the highest revelation by the Hindus, but in post-Vedic Tantrik monotheism,

Islamic Muwahidin tradition, Mutazali rationalism and Sufi humanism, 18th century European rationalism and Newtonian empiricism. The predominant element in it, however, was the *Vedanta*, by which he meant the *Upanishads*, the *Vedanta Sutra* and Sankara's Commentary on it.¹⁰ But, be it noted, Rammohun even modified Sankara's uncompromising monism to suit the needs of his day. First, he de-emphasized the importance of asceticism. Secondly, he posited *Maya* not as the inexpressible magic causing the illusive world to appear as real but as the creative power of Brahman, as Nature herself, which affirmed the eternal reality of the world — process. Here he may have derived inspiration from Tantra (especially *Kularnava* and *Mahanirvan*) though I do not think so.¹¹ Thirdly, he proclaimed the need for devotionalism. Religion was not merely the metaphysician's cold logic but the human being's deep emotion for a Creative God which would continue even after his liberation. The *Satyadharma* (later called *Brahmodharma*), thus interpreted, could be used to purify as well as unify the variety of religions that caused such discord in India. It was not "opposition to Brahminism but to a perversion of it". Purged of polytheism, idolatry and incarnation theory (unknown in Vedanta) and myths and rituals (often borrowed from pre-Aryan India), combining meditation on self (in Vedantic manner) with community worship (in Muslim or Unitary Christian style), affirming work for human welfare (*lokasreyas*) in the spirit of non-attachment (so much extolled in Gita), such a religion could build bridges between various Hindu sects, Hinduism and Islam, revelation and reason, knowledge and devotion, in other-words, tradition and modernity. If the moral precepts of Jesus were added, even the Christians (like Adam) could be drawn in.

In the Upanishads many leading men of the 19th century found the spring of socio-centric idealism and peace from deep anxiety. A rediscovery of the identity of the individual with the world-process, which was not merely an illusion but a manifestation of God, dispelled the sense of alienation and instilled a spontaneous joy in life. The *samsara* no longer appeared to be a dragging chain. It was not to be renounced, but to be redeemed for God. And that redemption involved work for social amelioration.

To Rammohun religion had two aspects — personal and social. The personal goal of religion was *moksha* but the social aim was "to

make Indians happy and comfortable here and hereafter", "political advantage and social comfort". The Upanishadic concept of *loka sreya*s, an unutilised tradition, was adapted to chime in with the Benthamite slogan of the day — the greatest good for the greatest number — and was made an instrument for social changes, like abolition of caste, priest craft, idolatry and suttee. For its propagation a modern type of organization, like the Atmiya Sabha and the Brahma Samaj, was created, replacing traditional *dals*, and modern mass media, like pamphlets, newspapers, and vernacular translations of sacred texts in their original versions, were used along with traditional disputes with learned antagonists. In interpreting Sanskrit classics he adopted Western historical — critical methods, unknown to his opponents, like Mrityunjoy Vidyalkara, who even opposed translation of the *Vedanta* in vernacular. Here the Orientalists had led the way, and Rammohun praised their linguistic exertions because of which "the public is no longer entirely at the mercy of the Brahmans in the interpretation of the Hindoo law and religions doctrine". He challenged the orthodox with their own weapons (especially on suttee and monotheism), showing them what were the real traditions and what were spurious. On the other hand, because he conducted the disputes in vernacular, ordinary people could follow the course of struggle and spot the winner.

Rammohun would leave the rest to the spread of education which, in his view, must be scientific as well as ethical. It was not merely to inform "but to develop and regulate all the powers of the mind, the emotions and the workings of conscience". He vehemently opposed government patronage of Sanskrit College in 1823, which would perpetuate an antiquated style of Sanskrit education. Its scholastic orientation, he warned Amherst, would "load the minds of youth with grammatical niceties and metaphysical distinctions of little or no practicable use to the possessors or to society". Without serving the purpose of modern life it would "be best calculated to keep the country in darkness". Achievement of knowledge should be "for the relief of Man's estate", and this was best done through teaching of mathematics, natural philosophy, chemistry, anatomy and other sciences. All this indicates a shift from a contemplative to an empiricist, achievement — oriented goal. He would not, however, like education to be entirely secular, as was being imparted

at Hindu College in his time, and provided for a balanced syllabus at his own school.

If education in western sciences was a major theme in the 19th century symphony, introduction of European skill and capital was another. Rammohun was aware of far-reaching changes taking place in Bengal economy due to rise in land values and of prices in general, free trade and advent of Europeans in large numbers. He realised that bourgeois liberal ideas would take root only in a capitalist system (as they did in the West) and, for ensuring it, he welcomed the indigo planters and supported European colonization. But he was equally aware of its possible abuses by European capitalists, especially under European rulers, likely to lend them executive and judicial protection. To prevent these he demanded separation of Executive and Judiciary *a la Montesquieu* and natural rights *a la Locke*. Freedom to own and dispose of property, freedom of the person and the press, freedom of opinion on religion and morals were germane to his whole concept of spiritual-moral development. His appeal to the King-in-Council against Adams's Press Regulation of 1823, criticism of Jury Notification, championship of *dayabhaga* system of inheritance for Bengal and rights of females to property, fight for zamindars' rights against the Company and the ryots' rights against the zaminders (as outlined in his letter to Bentinck on land system) are an extensive commentary on Locke as amended by Bentham. He even showed an inclination towards Owenite socialist ideas.

As William Adam wrote, "a man of his acute mind and local knowledge could not but see the selfish, cruel and almost insane efforts of the English in governing India, but he also saw that their system of Government and policy had redeeming qualities not to be found in the native governments". He accepted the British rule as providential, but only provisionally. It would last as long as it afforded protection to natural rights of the Indians. His joy at freedom of the Spanish colonies, the French Revolution of 1830 and the parliamentary reforms of 1832. like his grief over the failure of the Neapolitan revolt, underline this tentative collaborationism.

Dwarkanath Tagore developed it further by himself taking a leading role in capitalist enterprise. He had made money in the

Company's service (as salt and opium agent), brought zamindaris with it and reinvested the combined profits of office and land in large scale commercial/industrial ventures. He was soon the head of a considerable entrepreneurial empire comprising rice, flour and cotton mills, collieries, steamships, dockyards, banks and tea gardens. He knew his own limitations and would go no further than "an open and avowed partnership of European and the Bengal merchant with the capital of the latter". Such collaborationism on unequal terms broke down with the failure of his Union Bank which had overlent to European indigo planters. All the same, it was a novel direction for the Indian bourgeoisie to take and, although it was frustrated by British stronghold in Eastern India, it succeeded in the Western.

Rammohun and Dwarkanath had deliberately selected certain items from the repertoire of modernization — viz. 'Civilization and Enlightenment' and 'Enrich the Nation'. Their patriotism lay in their attempt to catch up with the spirit of the West which lay in science, progressive economy, clean morals and unifying religion. It was no blind *mimesis* of the Western externalia like dress, food, drinking habits or Christianity. As Fukuzawa said, this civilization was the product of the middle classes and yet put the community foremost. Rammohun was a collaborator, but, as Bentham aptly puts it, a "collaborateur in the service of mankind".

Selective adoption of alien and retention of indigenous values was rejected by the next generation, collectively known as the Derozians (or Young Bengal), because many of them were taught by an inspired teacher, H. V. L. Derozio, at Hindu College between 1826 and 1831. But even they did not go in for the whole programme of Westernization. They basically chose one strand of it, viz. romantic individualism of the revolutionary French bourgeoisie. Their ideas of general will and equality of man, derived from Rousseau and Paine, like their deism and scepticism, derived from Voltaire and Hume respectively, all through Derozio (who, in his letter to H. H. Wilson, wrote that although he acquainted his students "with the substance of Hume's celebrated dialogue between Cleanthes and Philo in which the most subtle and refined arguments against Theism are adduced", he also furnished them with "Dr. Reid's and Dugald Stewart's more acute replies to Hume — replies which to this day continue unrefuted"), struck blows at the shibboleths of Indian tradition.

The *shastric* injunctions appeared to be irrational, social customs—inhuman, and gods — totems of a decadent past. Even moral distinctions were sometimes seen as reflections of the impression of pain and pleasure, lacking rational or spiritual basis. Derozio's faith was entirely personal, bereft of any theological dogma and sectarian bias. He tried to instil into his disciples a high moral tone which could very well accompany a free man's worship. But some of the ideas he discussed with them provided more potent weapons against Hinduism than against Christianity. Neither the teacher nor his pupils had any grounding in Indian religions or philosophical systems. They could not compare what they inherited with what was imported, and find for themselves where truth lay. Lacking Rammohun's deep indigenous roots and wider contacts with European thought, they were entranced by the siren song of the West. Against their pretensions to create a brave new world stood the stark reality of orthodox environment, colonial economy and alien government. They were Hindu by birth but pseudo — English by education ; torn between rationalism and scepticism, family and freedom ; denied a foothold in commerce and industry and an honourable place in the political establishment. Their aggressive words and defiant conversions betrayed adolescent exhibitionism, alienation, ambiguity and self-pity. The Young Bengal failed to be what Milton Singer calls "cultural brokers", because they belonged nowhere — East or West. It is true, however, that their dabblings in radical thought gave them some insight into the character of British rule. Absence of popular voice in legislation, European monopoly of services, the Company's monopoly of trade, delay of law and cost of justice, drainage of wealth and burden of taxation did not escape their notice, although some of them, following Rammohun, were prepared to support colonization. Rights of ryots were upheld against those of the zamindars and need for education, especially female, were stressed. They advocated social reforms (widow remarriage and abolition of caste) though not on Rammohun's (or Vidya-sagar's) reference to ancient Smriti texts but on purely rationalist — utilitarian grounds. They helped to create a climate of opinion favourable to modernization and would have made greater impression if they did not unnecessarily exacerbate moderate orthodox feelings.

•

A feature of modernity—desire for glory, fame and personal achievement (in the best Western standard)—was writ large in the career of one of their later contemporaries—poet Madhusudan Dutt. His first drama rejected servile admiration for Sanskrit models, his second threw overboard the dicta of Sanskrit aesthetics, his third was an adaptation from Shakespeare, while his first epic, *Meghnadbadh Kavya*, consciously adopted Homer, Virgil and Milton as *gurus*, even to the extent of lifting passages and characters from them, not to speak of similies and metaphors. Yet the tragic grandeur of Homer and Milton came to be diluted by the tepid romanticism of the Derozian, caught between two worlds, one dead and the other powerless to be born. The hero, demon-king Ravana, was neither Satan nor Mephistopheles. The constraints of middle class circumstances turned the revolt into a melodrama. Dutt's last poems breathe an agony of disillusionment. What did he gain by this heedless pursuit of fame and wealth at the cost of ancestral values? They echo the heart-searching of a whole generation which had heard the siren song of the West.

No contrast could be more complete than that between this prodigal son of a rich, urban lawyer, student of Hindu College and aspirant after Greek and Roman fame, and Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, coming from a very poor Brahmin family of village Bengal, educated in Sanskritic tradition, who was never lured by the mirage of the West. He found enough potentialities of modernization in the Indian tradition. Being the finest Sanskrit scholar of the age, he could distinguish its genuine elements from the fake, the relevant from the archaic, the perennial from the parochial. For the orthodox pundits the Puranic and the local past alone counted; they were historically unaware of a richer past. For the Derozians the Indian past was anathema; everything had to be built anew on the *apriori* ideas of the West. Vidyasagar accepted neither of these positions. While his strong roots rejected any doctrinaire imposition of foreign grafting, the orthodox attempt to fossilize the current practice repelled him by its intellectual obscurantism and moral indifference. Confusion here arose from a false identification of local rites of a decadent age with the eternal religion of the Hindus. Once he had discovered its true spirit by using scientific methods of textual

interpretation, he could use it as a weapon to combat aberrations and as a tool to remake the future.

We can see the process in operation in several fields of his myriad activities. As the Principal of Sanskrit College, he challenged J. R. Ballantyne's attempt to buttress Indian idealistic philosophy of *Samkhya* and *Vedanta* by the philosophy of Bishop Berkeley. Vidyasagar's repudiation of idealism is as characteristic as the Japanese intellectuals' repudiation of pure Confucianism. He cut down scholastic deadwood from the Sanskrit syllabus and introduced a simpler grammar in order to save time for English, mathematics and natural philosophy. He recast subjects for senior scholarship to include History and Political Economy. More important than this, he wanted to develop a vernacular literature out of Sanskrit which would spread useful western knowledge. He prepared a series of texts right from a model primer. Where the educational system of Macaulay had split the personality of the elite and failed to filtrate to the masses, Bengali, now armed with a form from Sanskrit and a world-view from English, succeeded as an agency of modern education. A traditional institution like Sanskrit learning was thus adapted for a modernising role, and he strengthened it by providing for a normal school for teachers and vernacular schools for male and female.

The skilful use of tradition as a sanction for social reforms is best exemplified in Vidyasagar's handling of the widow-remarriage issue. The orthodox pundits quoted local customs and recent injunctions against it. The Derozians supported it on rationalist and utilitarian grounds but would not move out of their academic groves to fight for it. Vidyasagar adopted neither the latter's Western stance nor their Eastern passivity. He found sanction for it in the ancient texts and, once sure of their genuineness, moved into battle position. Modern methods of pamphleteering, mass petition and lobbying of bureaucratic and influential Indian opinion were used to pressurize the apathetic government and pulverize the orthodox opposition. His pamphlets are brilliant expositions of how to spot and interpret authentic tradition. In application of historical—critical methods he followed in the footsteps of Rammohun. But he added a novel feature—examination of the sociological aspect of

the problem—which was widely adopted by Ranade and Gokhale in their crusade for social reforms in western India. After him the liberal Hindus could base their modernist commitment to female emancipation on the spirit of the *Shastras*—"to complete", in Ranade's words, "the half-written sentence.. and produce the ideal out of the actual..."

The battle was only begun, and Vidyasagar's failure to persuade Indians to take advantage of the law permitting widow-remarriage, like his failure to stop polygamy, show how much ahead of time he was. In fact, he was searching for a modern role for the learned Brahmin who had been a link between the political organization and ethical ideals of society in ancient times. Vidyasagar added to the virtues of the archetypal Brahmin those of the western Protestant—rationality, devotion to worldly causes, capacity for leadership, courage of conviction and indomitable enterprise. This integration of the traditional and the modern in Vidyasagar inspired the reformers of western and northern India as no amount of borrowings from the West could.¹⁹

(5)

The climate of reformism changed after the Mutiny. The liberal-democratic views of John Stuart Mill were submerged under the raucous voice of the racist, conservative, imperialist Fitzjames Stephen, John Strachey and Herbert Risley. Exploitation became implicit in the very instruments of modernization—railways, commercialization of agriculture, free trade and efficient bureaucracy. It was challenged by the western as well as vernacular-educated elite. Bankimchandra Chatterjee reflected the new temper of disillusionment in arguments that borrowed ideas from home as well as abroad. Hindu tradition, the epic rather than the Upanishadic one, reinforced by Mill, Comté and Spencer, was used to fight the pervasive encroachment of British imperialism in all fields of Indian life.

One is reminded in this connection of the role of Nishimura in Japan at the end of the 19th century. Distressed by uncritical imitation of the West and Fakuizawa's call for a formal declaration of Christianity, Nishimura stressed the vital necessity of reviving

(Continued to page no. 116)

RABINDRANATH TAGORE AND THE NINETEENTH CENTURY RENAISSANCE*

UMA DASGUPTA

The first four decades of Rabindranath's life (1861-1941) which fell in the 19th century may be regarded as a late phase of the Indian 'renaissance'. This age developed its own distinctive tendencies in religion and literature, in politics and education. Rabindranath gave himself to many of these and they found in him a new and creative expression. Rabindranath himself grew in the process and moved towards articulating a new Indian identity, an identity that would reach out deep into India's past,¹ but would at the same time find itself in the universe where minds meet². This Indian personality would be equal with the best in the history of humanity, as one belonging to a 'great nation'³, free from the conflict of

* In this article I am citing extracts from Tagore by giving their gists in English translation.

1. "Chithi-Patra" (Correspondence, 1887)—*Rabindra Rachanabali* [Henceforth R. R.] II, Visva-Bharati edition, PP 516, 522 ; "Brāhman" (Brahmin, 1902)—R. R. IV, P 400 ; "Swadeshi Samāj" (Society and State, 1904)—R. R. III, P 545.
2. "Chithi-Patra" (Correspondence, 1887)—R. R. II, P 533 ; "Path O Pātheyo" (Ways and Means, 1908)—R. R. X (Visva-Bharati, 1971), P 467 ; "Samasyā" (Problem, 1908)—*ibid*, P 482 ; "Purba O Paschim" (East and West, 1908)—R. R. XII, P 272.
3. The concept comprising a nation of Hindus, Muslims and Christians in India was developed in Rabindranath's writings from 1907 onwards, the most notable exposition being in his novel *Gora* (1907-09), but there were earlier references to the ideas. Cf. "Chithi-Patra" (Correspondence, 1887)—R. R. II, PP 321, 528-29 ; "Coat bā Chāpkan" (Coat or Chapkan, 1888)—R. R. XII, PP 228-29 ; "Sati" (Suttee, 1897)—R. R. V (Visva-Bharati, 1974), P 102 ; "Abasthyā O Byabasthyā" (Problem and Solution, 1905)—R. R. IV, P 609 ; "Path O Pātheyo" (Ways and Means, 1908)—R. R. X, PP 453, 465, 466, 467 ; "Samasyā" (Problem, 1908)—R. R. X, PP 479-83 ; "Purbo O Paschim" (East and West, 1908)—R. R. XII, PP 266, 273 ; "Gorā" (Gora, 1909)—R. R. VI, PP 568-71 ; "Nation Ki" (What is nation, 1901)—R. R. III, P 515.

communities, integrated with the universe of men, not weak and begging⁴ as was the nature of the 19th-century Indian gentleman, educated in western styles. The discovery of an Indian personality was perhaps the only lasting expression of Rabindranath's nationalism, although his nationalist participation ranged from reciting poetry at the Hindu Mela in 1876 to giving his best in patriotic songs to the Swadeshi movement against the Partition of Bengal.

The quest for an Indian personality was fundamentally Rabindranath's quest for self-respect. It was a response to the humiliation of imperial rule. The source of the humiliation was in the concrete context of the ruler and the ruled. Its evil effect was in the alienation of the western educated elite from the masses of Indian society. Rabindranath was not against western knowledge; on the contrary, he had respect for it. He was not opposed to the West, he was opposed to imperial rule. In that sense nationalism had changed the face of the Indian renaissance. In fact, it was Rabindranath's hope that the Indian personality will take within itself the new Western knowledge and new Western ways. He was aware that the alienation within Indian society was not merely a product of the colonial context but had its roots in the Indian past. But the colonial context had made the alienation fundamental, and created conflicts within the elite. It was in breaking up this alienation and working for unity that Rabindranath sought India's salvation. But, Rabindranath gradually moved on from there and saw the Indian personality as a fundamental fusion between East and West. That was his move from patriotism to universalism. There the Indian man became the universal man.

It was at the Santiniketan School that Rabindranath felt his way towards the development of the Indian personality. At the turn of the century he set up the *asram* school at Santiniketan as an endeavour in constructive self-help, the scene of his biggest creative experiment. Boys came to Santiniketan after they were six, took their entrance (school-leaving) examination at seventeen or eighteen, lived very

4. "Ingrāj O Bhāratbāsi" (Englishmen and Indians, 1893)—R. R. X, PP 401-02;

"Atyukti" (Exaggeration, 1902)—R. R. IV, PP 452, 455;

"Swadeshi Samāj" (Society and State, 1904)—R. R. III, P. 535;

"Purbo O Paschim" (East and West, 1908)—R. R. XII, P 267;

simply in primitive huts made of mud and straw, in a community of teachers and householders, wore the simplest clothes and moved barefooted, as did their teachers, took their lessons in their mother tongue, sitting underneath trees or in the verandahs of the thatched cottages, sang songs of the seasons written for them by the poet himself, were initiated into art, and finally grew up to work and move among scholars from far and near who came to Visva-Bharati for the study of the cultures of East and West.⁵ But there was more than that in Rabindranath's concern. He was conscious of how the 19th century Indian gentleman, newly educated in English, was fast becoming alienated from his own people, from his rural roots. Rabindranath was convinced that India lived in her villages. The Santiniketan school was placed away from the city. The countryside surrounding it was dotted by villages. At the school at Santiniketan one of the things compulsory for the teachers and boys was to go out to the neighbouring villages of Bhubandanga as well as regularly to visit the Santal villages on the Western side of the school in order to understand their problems as an integral part of their educational programme.⁶ As the boys grew older, they were taken closer to the life of the villagers. They were made to know about the work of peasants, weavers, potters, oil-grinders and others, and about their modes of life, their festivals and rituals. The early beginning of the Sriniketan programme of rural reconstruction could indeed be found in these attempts at drawing the boys of the school to the villages around.

But Rabindranath also knew that times were different and 'the boys' had to be made fit for the changing circumstances of the times.⁷ He saw to it that though away from the city, the Santiniketan school was still close enough for access to books and laboratories, libraries and machine-made equipment, all the new gifts of

5. Uma Das Gupta, *Santiniketan and Sriniketan: A Historical Introduction*, Visva-Bharati Quarterly Booklet (Santiniketan, 1976), pp 13-15.

6. *ibid.*, pp 20-21.

7. "Chithi-Patra" (Correspondence, 1887)—R. R. II, p 513 ;
 "Kartabya-Niti" (The Rules of Duty, 1893)—R. R. XII, pp 482-83 ;
 "Coat bā Chāpkan" (Coat or Chapkan, 1898)—R. R. XII, p 227 ;
 "Bhāratbarshiya Samāj" (Indian Society, 1901)—R. R. III, p 524.



knowledge from the city. It was Rabindranath's idea that a complete give and take between the village and the town could be achieved through the medium of a new education and the leadership of the educated and the creative minority. It was this desire to equip the younger generation for leadership that led to Rabindranath's pursuit for an identity for the Indian. He looked forward to the future and looked upon change as inevitable.⁸ He wrote, bantering those who did not.⁹ His own generation, as a whole, had disappointed him. They had used their English education wrongly. To them patriotism was merely an idea out of books picked up from their devotion to Byron and Garibaldi. They had no knowledge of the state of their own country, nor the inclination to know it.¹⁰ It was in this alienation that Rabindranath saw the root of many evils. They used their English education to improve their own status in society. In the last quarter of the 19th century none had cut themselves off from the British raj. Instead, they fought like the devil for government offices.¹¹ They believed they were being true to their age-old allegiances to caste and community by their unfailing petitions to the British raj on every point. That was what they understood by patriotism and public spirit. To Rabindranath that was what kept them away from working hard, and for the country.

8. "Bangé-Samāj-biplab" (Social Revolt in Bengal, 1877)—*Bharati*, Magh 1284, p 300 ;

"Chithi-patra" (Correspondence, 1887)—R. R. II, p 513 ;

"Bhāratbarshiya Samaj" (Indian Society, 1901)—R. R. III, p 524 ;

"Swadeshi Samāj" (Society and State, 1904)—R. R. III, p 546.

9. Rabindranath sarcastically wrote how when Napoleon III was asked whom he would like to be, he had answered he would wish to be his grandson, such was his keenness for the future. But there are others and hundreds of them, who when asked the same question would answer that they would wish to be their grandfathers. Their grandsons too would feel that way, Rabindranath wrote. See Rabindranath Tagore, "Ek Chōkhō Samskāra" (One-eyed reform, 1881) *Bharati*, Pous 1288, p 404.

10. "Saphōlatār sadupāy" (The honest way to success, 1904)—R. R. III, p 569 ; "Palli-Sebā" (Village welfare), *Palli Prakriti* (Visva-Bharati, 1962), p 65.

11. "Sikshār hērfēr" (Vagaries of Education, 1892)—R. R. XII, p 280 ;

"Brāhman" (Brahmin, 1902)—R. R. IV, p 393 ;

"Abasthyā O Byabasthā" (Problem and Solution, 1905)—R. R. III, pp 613-614.

As Rabindranath wrote :

'It was not all that long ago when we were young. Yet it seems almost that an age has gone by when we were young and our imaginations were filled with high-sounding words like mother-India. But we never really knew where to look for her. Patriotism was no more than a borrowed emotion, it was addiction to an imported idea. We acknowledged mother-India in her ancient glory. We failed to take account of her current miseries. Our patriotism kept us engaged in pleading at foreign courts. No good for the country has come out of our kind of pursuit. We started out as heroes, turned into beggars before the Raj, and ended up as self-centred house-holders counting our own savings.'¹²

Rabindranath's ideas would appear to be largely subjective, often boiling down to nothing more than moral exhortations. No one would deny that if men worked hard and for the country, the country would prosper. The question has always been why men do not, in fact, work hard and why they do not work for their country at all. The most fundamental idea of Rabindranath Tagore in this respect was that of the alienation of the educated elite from the masses of Indian society. Rabindranath was convinced that this alienation must end. He therefore appealed to the educated to turn to the people, irrespective of caste or community, to those silent masses,¹³ that "vast obscure multitude"¹⁴ in the country outside the *bhadralok* class,¹⁵ who ascribed their miseries to past

12. "Chhātrader proti Sambhāsan" (Address to Students, 1905)—R. R. III, pp 588-90. For more on the same stream of thought, also see "Path O Pathayo" (Ways and Means, 1908)—R. R. X, p 459; "Samasyā" (Problem, 1908)—R. R. X, p 469;

"Desh Nāyak" (The country's leader, 1906)—R. R. X, pp 488-89, 494.

13. "Sapholatār sadupāy" (The honest way to success, 1904)—R. R. III, p 578.

14. Rabindranath Tagore to Leonard Elmhirst, 19 December 1937, File Leonard Elmhirst, Rabindra-Bhavana Archives, Santiniketan. Leonard Elmhirst was an English graduate in agriculture from Cornell University, U. S. A., who started the Visva-Bharati Institute of Rural Reconstruction at Sriniketan in 1922.

15. *ibid.*

P, 5872

sins and were convinced that there was no escape from suffering. It would be for the educated man to break up their inertia and lead them to self-help and self-reliance through quiet unostentatious and "single-handed" work, building it up "beyond the notice of the public".¹⁶ If once he could reach out to his people and find his own identity with them, the educated man would become an essential bridge between the two shores of the English-educated and the rest in the country, between the confusions of a past and present civilization within the same society.¹⁷ Like the Russian *narodniki* he valued the effort of going "to the people" for its own sake, to put heart into them and to remind them that there was dignity in them as human beings.¹⁸ That was the direction Rabindranath Tagore gave to Renaissance thought, part of the change for which he himself worked.

It was Rabindranath's contention that the major historical force behind the change was the flowing in of Western ideas from the early nineteenth century.¹⁹ He regarded them as new ideas of a more promising future, bringing in new knowledge of a new life united with the larger humanity. But, what was more important was that those ideas were perforce coming into an old and traditional society which had long lost its inner momentum. Rabindranath argued that we owe our awakening to those ideas, if for no other reason, for the trauma it produced in the national soul. The impact of the West broke the stagnation of centuries not merely by its freshness

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16. "Ingrāj O Bhāratbāsi" (Englishmen and Indians)—R. R. X, pp 398-402 ;
 "Nababarsha" (New Year, 1902)—R. R. IV, pp 373-76 ;
 "Sabhāpatir Abhibhāsan", Pabna Provincial Conference, 1907 (Presidential Address, 1907)—R. R. X, pp 514-21.
 17. "Bharatbarsher itihās" (Indian history, 1902)—R. R. IV, p 384.
 18. "Palli-sebā". *Op. cit.*, p 64.
 19. "Hindu bibāho" (Hindu marriage, 1887)—R. R. XII, pp 425, 437-38, 440, 441, 447 ;
 "Chithi-patra" (Correspondence, 1887)—R. R. II, pp 521, 534 ;
 "Ādim Sambōi" (Ancient heritage, 1892)—R. R. XII, pp 477-78 ;
 "Samūdra jātra" (Crossing the Seas, 1892)—R. R. XII, pp 216-17 ;
 "Sir Lapel Griffin" (1892)—R. R. X, p 535.

For a discussion on the same theme see also Susobhan Sarkar, *Bengal Renaissance and other Essays* (People's Publishing, 1907), p 159 ff.

but through its humiliation for the Indian.²⁰ He saw in this trauma a hope for the future. Rabindranath believed that Indian Society had been static for ages, its vitality had been sapped. He traced this decline back to the days of *Manu*, to the dogma of his *Samhitas* and of the *Puranas*, those sacred books of religious mythology.²¹ Hindu society was put in chains and turned lifeless.

When India was in her glory she sprouted new philosophies out of which emerged Buddhism, creating a revolutionary situation. The Puranic sages took unnecessary alarm and society was disciplined. They saw to it that such revolutions do not repeat themselves, and the Hindu society declined for want of reform and an abundance of orthodoxy.²² Rabindranath saw Hindu society as one revolving round the life of the householder and the community among whom he lived.²³ The concept of a nation, of one's homeland, was too impersonal to have any place in the householder's existence. This domesticity became the principal force in society with the passage of time. There was no need felt for the world outside the home. The intimacy of the community turned society into something like a dense jungle in which the individual could hardly shake off the constraints upon him and raise his head. According to Rabindranath, contact with the West was to change this, it was gradually to release the individual from the bonds of his own immediate society and lead him to start living for distant objectives. Thus Rabindranath explained,

'In the past we lived very much in a personal world of devotion, love and faith. This devotion was not to an ideal but to a particular person, be he a king or a *guru*. This person stood for whatever we knew of truth and knowledge. That was not so in Europe where it was quite natural to give one's life

20. "Hindu bibāhō" (Hindu marriage, 1887)—R. R. XII, p 415 ;
 "Prāchya Samāj" (Eastern Society, 1891)—R. R. XII, p 460 ;
 "Atyukti" (Exaggeration, 1902)—R. R. IV, pp 452-53.

21. "Karmér ūmedār" (Job-seekers, 1891)—R. R. XII, p 470.

22. "Bangé samāj-biplab" (Social revolt in Bengal, 1877)
 —*Bharati*, Magh 1284, pp 298-99.

23. "Prāchya o Prōtichya" (East and West, 1891)—R. R. XII, pp 243, 245, 249 ;
 "Ādim sambōl" (Ancient heritage, 1892)—R. R. XII, p 476.

in search of truth, in the pursuit of an idea. But Western education and European learning had already touched the Indian and led him to overcome to some extent the narrow, personal quest and work for distant objectives.²⁴

Rabindranath welcomed the new enterprise of the Indian,²⁵ his achievements in the sciences,²⁶ his aspiration for his country's political unity,²⁷ even his protests against the government's wrongs, —a method he would later denounce.

Rabindranath admired most of all the new Bengali literature, and marked with joy the fact that the Bengalis took pride in Madhusudan, Hem Chandra and Bankim Chandra because of what they were, and not because they were the equal of Byron or Scott, as were the earlier comparisons.²⁸ What also appealed to Rabindranath were the signs of a social revolt among the educated in Bengali society.²⁹ So he wrote :

'We take the signs of the social revolt in Bengal as good omen. The torpor of all these years has somehow been broken. The educated in society have found new zeal. Had they waited longer, the whole of the Bengali-race might have died out. It is hoped that with some destroying and rebuilding, and

24. "Chithi-patra" (Correspondence, 1887)—R. R. II, pp 513-14.

25. An interesting account of this new enterprise of the Indian and his new associations is in Sumit Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal 1903-1908* (People's Publishing, 1973), in his section on Swadeshi Enterprise, p 109 ff.

26. "Bāṅgālir āshā o nairāshya" (The Bengali's hope and despair, 1877) —*Bharati*. Magh 1284, pp 308-10 ;

"Chithi-patra" (Correspondence, 1887)—R. R. II, p. 537 ;

"University Bill" (1904)—R. R. III, p 599. Also see Letters of Rabindranath Tagore to Jagadish Chandra Bose, 1900-1901, *Chithipatra* 6 (Visva-Bharati, 1957), pp 13-14, 26-27, 32-33.

27. "Chhātrader prōti sambhāsan" (Address to students, 1905)—R. R. III, p 582.

28. "Saphalatār Sadupāy" (Honest way to success, 1904)—R. R. III, p 561 ;

"Chhātrōdér Prōti Sambhāsan" (Address to Students, 1905) ;

"Pūrba o Paschim" (East and West, 1908)—R. R. XII, p 266.

29. "Vidyāsāgarcharit" (On Vidyasagar, 1895)—R. R. IV, p 477.

the coming in of new sources from all sides, Bengali society—would soon revive on stronger foundation.’³⁰

That social revolt again was a direct consequence of the Western connection. In India the colonial dimension included not merely political conquest but new ideas from the West conveyed through its literature. Many Indians were overwhelmed and accepted the gifts of Europe without question. But then came a reaction, reaction born out of a new sense of self respect and shown in a rejection of the culture of Europe and its ideals.³¹ There is a vivid record of those times in Rabindranath’s prose. The Poet observed :

‘When our youth first took to English they found everything native to the country truly distasteful, and everything foreign highly attractive. But the time soon came when there was a pull towards one’s own heritage in literature, philosophy, science etc. With this came the radically opposed reactions of belittling many elements in Western culture. Just a few days ago it was all destroy and discard ; now it is all keep and preserve.’³²

This was in 1877, in the years of Rabindranath’s youth. Rabindranath grew up acutely aware of this ambivalence among his contemporaries, and he himself was never entirely free of it. His effort lay in the combining of Indian values with the new knowledge from the West. Just as he felt disturbed at Young Bengal’s unreasoning disrespect of one’s society³³ and at unthinking, random reform breaking up social harmony,³⁴ he was at the same time loathe to

30. “Bangé Samāj-biplab” (Social revolt in Bengal, 1877)—*Bharati*, Magh 1284, p 300.

31. “Hindu bibāhā” (Hindu marriage, 1887)—R. R. XII, pp 414-15.

32. “Bangé Samāj-biplab”—(Social revolt in Bengal, 1877)—*Bharati*, Magh 1284, p 298.

33. “Ram Mohan Roy” (1884)—*Bharati*, Magh 1291, p 465.

34. “Samasya” (Problem, 1884)—*Bharati*, Magh 1291, pp 499-500 ;
 “Hindu bibāhā” (Hindu marriage, 1887)—R. R. XII, p 447 ;
 “Desiya rājya” (Indian State, 1905)—R. R. III, pp 631-32.

accept the exaggerations over India's past greatness³⁵. Rabindranath's position was that whereas we cannot uproot ourselves from our past, we cannot also cling to its orthodoxies ; while we cannot turn our backs on the new Western education, we cannot also blindly imitate the West.³⁶

'It is common sense that we would neither be able to break away from our roots nor would we be able to reject the English education that surrounds us on all sides. We would have not merely rain but some thunder too. But bringing new out of the old.'³⁷

As Rabindranath saw it, there was no way out for us from those new ideals of the West, because they were based upon true knowledge. They were our cargo from across the seas. It was too late to stop their coming. It would have been another matter had the process not been started. But then who could fail to see how positive and life-affirming those ideas were ? How welcome they would be in a doctrinaire society³⁸ ? English education would not make us English³⁹, Rabindranath knew. He knew that, at its best, it would bring a new context into our timeless existence. It would turn our eyes to the world outside our home, even if we should continue to remain our home-loving, peace-loving selves. Rabindranath saw no harm in that so long as our minds were kept open to the new currents of thought in humanism. We⁴⁰ will be aware that the universe exists.⁴¹

Rabindranath argued that Hindu society was too much taken up by trivialities. The Hindus had no time to comprehend the beautiful

35. "Hindu bibāhā" (Hindu marriage, 1187)—R. R. XII, p 415 ;

"Prachya o prōtichya" (East and West, 1891)—R. R. XII, p 249.

36. "Prasanga kathā" (Current topics, 1898)—R. R. X, pp 558-59.

37. "Prachya o prōtichya" (East and West, 1891)—R. R. XII, p 249.

38. "Hindu bibāhā" (Hindu marriage, 1887)—R. R. XII, pp 436-37.

39. "Bārōari Mōngōl" (Commonweal, 1901)—R. R. IV, p 438 ;

"Saphālatār Sadupay" (Honest way to Success, 1904)—R. R. III, 567-68.

40. "Prachya o prōtichya" (East and West, 1991)—R. R. XII, p 248.

41. *Ibid.*

and various universe, to make the acquaintance of man, to work to alleviate human suffering of which there was so much around. Totally oblivious of the life-flow of a larger humanity, the Hindu stayed in his own little corner, and lived out all his constraints and taboos in strict measure.⁴² These minutest of calculations left him without any other occupation and without any objective. As Rabindranath put it, was it God's intention, Rabindranath asked, that we should be Hindu and not human?⁴³ There were instances of men being punished for slaughtering a cow, but not for killing a fellow man. Contact with the lower caste was an offence against society, but playing havoc with his property was not. A criminal had nothing to fear so long as he married off his daughter in time, before she turned eight years of age, and kept the record straight. There was the easy way out of crime too: a ceremonial bath in the Ganges would wipe out both small and big crime. In this way a social being lost his sense of right and wrong.⁴⁴ Man was treated as clog in a machine and he became machine-like in turn.⁴⁵

A society such as it was, held together by lifeless dogma, was too helpless to withstand the forces of change. The Bengalis were seen crossing the seas, society looking on silently.⁴⁶ Rabindranath could see that Manu's prohibitions were fast exploding. Contact with the British offered all the advantages of new jobs, even better marriages.⁴⁷ Rabindranath could see where English education

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42. "Karmar ūmédār" (Job-Seekers, 1891)—R. R. XII, p 469 ;
 "Bidéshiya atithi ébon désiya ātithya" (Foreign guest and Indian hospitality, 1894)—R. R. XII, pp 487-89 ;
 "Samudrajātrā" (Crossing the Seas, 1892)—R. R. XII, pp 212-15 ;
 "Āchārér atyāchār" (Tyranny of custom, 1892)—R. R. XII, pp 205-07.
43. "Ajōgya bhakti" (Misplaced faith, 1898)—R. R. XII, pp 254-60 ;
 "Prasanga-kathā" (Current topics, 1898)—R. R. X, pp 555-56.
44. "Ingrājer ātankō" (Terror of the British, 1893)—R. R. X, p 539.
45. "Karmér ūmédār" (Job-seekers, 1891)—R. R. XII, p 470 ;
 "Barōāri Mōngōl" (Commonweal, 1891)—R. R. IV, p 427.
46. "Samudrajātrā" (Crossing the seas, 1892)—R. R. XII, p 215.
47. "Samudrajātrā" (Crossing the seas, 1892)—R. R. XII, p 216 ;
 "Mukhūjjes bonam barūjje" (Mukherji vs. Banerji, 1898)—R. R. X, p 582.

would appeal most, not in any love for it nor its agents the British rulers. The Indians, on the whole, studied English to qualify as clerks. For the rest they boasted of their traditions and prided in their past. So Rabindranath wrote in 1891 :

‘We have begun to say to the English that they are not all that great. They have knowledge of machines and cannons, but in spiritual civilization we Indians are greater. We can teach them the ABCD of spirituality which after all is fundamental to man’s existence. They regard us as less civilized only out of blind ignorance. They are not able even to comprehend the greatness of the Hindu race.’⁴⁸

To Rabindranath that was the weak man’s response. But he was hopeful that the confrontation caused through the clash of interest between the ruler and the ruled, the insults against the ruled, the deep-seated grudges against the ruler, the sense of inadequacy among the ruled, would together restore the Indian’s will to build himself and his nation.⁴⁹ In the same year 1891 he wrote with hope :

‘At the first instance we clung desperately to our soil. But the hope is that with time we would consider our situation more calmly and take lessons from the conflict in which we live.’⁵⁰

Rabindranath envisaged the coming phase of reconstruction as one of the nation’s withdrawal within itself : a phase of silent creative endeavour. Rabindranath believed that the Indian mind had accepted the British dispensation because Indian creativity was dead. He deplored the exhibitionism of nationalist politics as he saw it and

48. “Ingrāj o bhāratbāsi” (Englishmen and Indians, 1893)—R. R. X, pp 393-94.

49. “Ingrāj o bhāratbāsi” (Englishmen and Indians, 1893)—R. R. X, p 384 ;
 “Rājnitir didhā” (Ambivalence of politics, 1893)—R. R. X, p 408 ;
 “Prasanga-kathā” (Current topics, 1898)—R. R. X, pp 559-60 ;
 “University Bill” (1904)—R. R. III, p 597 ;
 “Imperialism” (1905)—R. R. X, p 433 ;
 “Pūrba o paschim” (East and West, 1908)—R. R. X II, pp 269-272.

• 50. “Ingrāj o bhāratbāsi” (Englishmen and Indians, 1893)—R. R. X, p 395.

considered that to some extent at least this exhibitionism was the product of India's British connection, an attempt made by some of the Indians to impress their British masters.⁵¹ This worried Rabindranath who could see the contrast between the immensely strong, immensely confident British culture and the deeply-riven Indian Society always at odds within itself. He knew that British contact drew superior Indian minds away from its proper concerns and alienated creative minds from their moorings.⁵²

Much of what Rabindranath had to say was conditioned by the presence of British imperialism in India. Almost always he returned to the thought of self-respect, a concern which pressed itself upon him because he clearly felt humiliated at the British presence in India. It was not as if Rabindranath was seeking India's salvation in a vacuum. He was discussing the question in the concrete context of the ruler and the ruled, in a race-based empire. That was why, despite his regard for the new knowledge from the West, he could not but hold English education responsible for deepening the alienation in Indian society.⁵³ Sons wrote to their fathers in English. Zamindars learnt English, spoke English, wrote English. Only the cultivators did not have the privilege. And the result was they were

51. "Kanthō rōdh" (On Sedition Bill, 1898) — R. R. X, p 429 ; "Nababarsha" (New Year, 1902) — R. R. IV, pp 375-76 ;

"Saphōlatār sadupay" (Honest way to success, 1904) — R. R. III, pp 574, 577-78 ;

"Dēsh Nāyak" (Country's leader, 1906) — R. R. X, p 493.

52. "Désiya rājya" (Indian State, 1905) — R. R. III, p 629 ;

"Abasthyā o byabasthā" (Problem and solution, 1905) — R. R. III, pp 614-15 ;

"Sabhāpatir abhibhāsan" (Presidential Address, 1907) — R. R. X, pp 516-17.

53. "Apōmāner prōtikar" (Insult avenged, 1894) — R. R. X, p 417 ;

"Apar pakshér kathā" (The opponents view, 1898) — R. R. X, p 583 ;

"Nākālér nākāl" (Imitation disgraced, 1901) — R. R. XII, p 230 ;

"Bhāratbarshér itihās" (India's history, 1902) — R. R. IV, p 384 ;

"Brāhmān (Brahmin, 1902) — R. R. IV, 395-99 ;

"Chhātrōder prōtī sambhāsan" (Address to students, 1905) — R. R. III, p 585.

nowhere.⁵⁴ English education had divided men of the same society in a way that confused them about their true natures. Some were totally taken up with what they learnt in class, so many others remained outside it all. In Rabindranath's words :

'In days past we had almost no rest from our English Schools. Our schools followed us everywhere, right up to our homes. We addressed our friends in English ; at political meetings we addressed our countrymen in English. But it is not so now, not to the same extent. Now at the end of the School-day we can return home to some rest. We can see our mother lighting the evening lamp. Can we then turn away in contempt thinking it is only an earthen lamp ?'⁵⁵

Such a gap between college and country was unknown in other societies where the two were necessarily unified. In 19th century India they were in opposition. It was in British times, Rabindranath held, that community life in the Indian village was seen to break for the first time. With the creation of the professional classes the British-Indian city began to draw Indians away from the village. The English-educated among them were bowled over by the newly-imported concept of government as the rightful guardian of the people and relinquished to it their own duties to society.⁵⁶ A new paradigm was created as it were with the government as guardian angel. According to Rabindranath this produced two sets of reaction, but of the same kind : dependence upon the Government and bitterness with it. Both attitudes went against Rabindranath's grain. So he wrote :

'It is because we have placed all our reliance on another that the failure to obtain our demands leads us to agitate so

54. "Sikshār hérphér" (Vagaries of education, 1892) — R. R. XII, pp 279-81, 284-86 ;

"Chhātrōder prōti sambhāsan" (Address to students, 1905) — R. R. III, p 583.

55. "Swadēshi samāj" (Society and State, 1904) — R. R. III, pp 528-30.

56. "Saphōlatār Sadūpay" (Honest way to success, 1904) — R. R. III, pp 567-71, 572-73 ;

"Abasthyā o byabastha" (Problem and Solution 1905) — R. R. III, p 604.

furiously. We consider this as public spirit. But it is no other than a weakness. We console ourselves by taking pride in it. But this is no sign of love for the country and therefore not likely to succeed. The true public spirit is a rarity in our country. We can hardly conceal that from ourselves. Still we can make use of whatever public spirit there is among us however meagre. The only way to overcome this limitation is to feed the public spirit by voluntary work in the service of the country. It is only by serving that we can love. We can love the country only by working for it. That has now become essential.⁵⁷

Rabindranath tirelessly fought the notion of passing on to the Government what had to be the Indian's own work of love, his own sense of duty. He found it pathetic that the Indian needed to ascertain whether the Conservatives came to power in Britain, or the Liberals.⁵⁸ The expectation was that if one rejected Indian demands, the other would not. But that was the wrong way, Rabindranath wrote. Politics was no substitute for grass-root work in the service of the nation ; hatred of the British rulers was no means of taking one's country out of the woods. Hatred and anger, proud and haughty words only showed up a smallness of heart. Rabindranath warned against it as there was no show of strength in it, but only of weakness, a weakness arising out of an urge in us to be like our British masters, forgetting our natural differences with them, and being rebuffed. Rabindranath was convinced that the opposition was all too clear. It was ordained and could not be overcome. Under the circumstances no good could come out of our desperately borrowing from them. The only way was for us to take a closer look at ourselves, to know ourselves, our people, and our land. Rabindranath's hero was the Japanese patriot Joshida Torajiro who would travel barefooted the length and breadth of his country only to know it in every detail.⁵⁹ But the English-educated Indian in the

57. "Saphōlatār sadupay" (Honest way to success, 1904) — R. R. III, pp 575-76.

58. "University Bill" (1904) — R. R. III, p 599.

59. "Chhātrōder prōti sambhasan" (Address to students, 1905) — R. R. III, pp 585-586.

19th century learnt of his country and its history from the texts of English pandits.⁶⁰ That history was only a chronicle of the Hindu's hopeless wars with his successive conquerors. In it the Indian did not exist. It was as if all life outside the battle field had come to a standstill. As Rabindranath wrote in protest :

'Wars were by no means the most important thing in the Indian of those years. Travellers see and grasp only what is without. They do not look into our homes, and the history they write is necessarily of the same kind. Reading that kind of history we would think that the Indian did not exist, that all life outside the battlefield had come to a standstill. The countryside was being swept over by the Moghuls and the Pathans from north to south and west to east. But we forget that the Indian was there as much as the invader was. How else could Kabir and Nanak and Chaitanya be born in the midst of such turmoil ? It is that India outside the history book which we know.'⁶¹

That being what we learnt of India's history, our acquaintance with British history led us to believe that things would have been different with us had there been a parliament in India as well as the public spirit⁶². Rabindranath was only too anxious to emphasize that if we were to feel shame over what we lacked, then the cause of shame had to be correctly detected. The cause lay in our want of manliness and not in the lack of European institutions.⁶³

Rabindranath's ideas of history, his interpretation of the Indian past from the days of *Manu* to his own times formed one powerful part of his preoccupations, whereas his quest for a diagnosis of India's ills and his active concern for a cure comprised his kind of politics. History of Politics so understood crossed often in his thoughts, creating problems of interpretation for the historian of ideas. Rabindranath argues on the one hand that men attain to excellence in their own diverse ways and they must be allowed to do

60. "Saphālatār sadūpay" (Honest way to success, 1904) — R. R. III, p 569.

61. "Bhāratbarshér itihās" (India's history, 1902) — R. R. IV, p 378.

62. "Désiya rājya" (Indian State, 1905) — R. R. III, pp 626-27.

63. "Désiya rājya" (Indian State, 1905) — R. R. III, pp 627-28.

so. This was how progress in general was achieved, he explained. The kind of excellence found in Europe due to certain natural advantages there was not to be found in India. Therefore the Indian path to progress could not be the same as Europe's. If we take that as failure we would deprive the world of what we can contribute to it with our God-given resources, and according to our inherent advantages. Yet, with all its worth, European civilization was quite beyond us.⁶⁴ Rabindranath believed indeed that the ideals of both civilizations, of Europe and of India, were equally indispensable for mankind. But there was no way in which the differences between the two could be blotted out. Our circumstances, our history, our institutions were all too distinct. At the same time Rabindranath argued that the road to salvation was the same for all. The road to salvation was in manliness, strength, and courage all of which was attainable through constructive, patient, and selfless-devotion to work in the interest of the nations alone.⁶⁵

Rabindranath welcomed the organization of 'national education', of education in the mother-tongue, as a thing that had put balm on our wounds.⁶⁶ He even seized upon the craze for indigeneous course — cloth produced out of *swadeshi* enterprise in place of the finer foreign-make.⁶⁷ He saw in it an enthusiasm for the country, and an idealism, which could act like a symbol to stir up hearts from without. He hoped that hand-in-hand would come the change from within, of a turning inwards in search of that God-given strength inherent in every man and in every race. Rabindranath believed that the time had already come when there was some preparedness for work and unity in the realization that the world outside could

64. "Désiya rājya" (Indian state, 1905)—R. R. III, pp 631-32.

65. "Ingrāj o bharat basi" (Englishmen and Indians, 1893)—R. R. X, p 398 ;
 "Swadēsh Samāj (Society State, 1904)—R. R. III, p 528 ;
 "Saphalatār sadupāy" (Honest way to success, 1904)—R. R. III, pp 560, 564, 570-71 ;
 "Samasyā" (Problem, 1908)—R. R. X, pp 483-84.

66. "Sikshār hērphér" (Vagaries of education, 1892)—R. R. XII, pp 284-86 ;
 "Bhāratbarshér itihās" (India's history, 1902)—R. R. IV, p 386 ;
 "Dēshnāyak" (Country's leader, 1906)—R. R. X, p 493.

67. "Brōto dhāran" (Taking an oath, 1905)—R. R. III, p 624 ;
 "Abyasthā o byabasthā (Problem and solution, 1905)—R. R. III, p 608. .

deliver blows, but strength could come only from within.⁶⁸ That strength was our self-respect, and faith in our own resources. Our resources were where the masses were, our self-respect was in our unity with them. That would give every clue to our needs, the clue to our particular needs in education and association.⁶⁹ After 1906-07, Rabindranath came right out against boycott and begging, the twin weapons of the nationalists.⁷⁰ He stressed throughout the years that there was no good in complaining and quarrelling, in feeling insulted and pained.⁷¹ There would always be pain as long as there was weakness. There was weakness in the Indian Society and that was in the alienation of the Western-educated elite from the masses.⁷² The weakness was ours, not another's. How could it be resolved by blaming another?⁷³ Could self-respect be gained by legal means, Rabindranath asked?⁷⁴

None but we ourselves can redress the wrongs done to us. If we are to put a halt to the rules that have been guiding our society then we must build a dam against the forces of reaction. And that by uniting, each one of us, and feeling with

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68. "Nababarsha" (New Year, 1902)—R. R. IV, p 373 ;
 "Abyasthā o byabasthā" (Problem and solution, 1905)—R. R. III, pp 607-08.
69. "Swadēshi Samāj" (Society and State, 1904)—R. R. III, p 531 ;
 "Saphalatār sadupāy" (Honest way to success, 1904)—R. R. III p 577 ;
 "Chhātrōder prōti sambhāsan" (Address to students, 1905)—R. R. III, p 581 ;
 "Sabhāpotir abhibhāsan" (Presidential Address, 1907)—R. R. X, p 521 ;
 "Pūrba o paschim" (East and West, 1908)—R. R. XII, p 266.
70. "Path o pātheyō" (Ways and Means, 1908)—R. R. X, pp 462, 468 ;
 "Pūrba o paschim (East and West, 1908)—R. R. XII, p 267.
71. "Apōmānēr prōtikar" (Insult avenged, 1894)—R. R. X, pp 415-17 ;
 "Prasanga Kathā (Current topics, 1898), R. R. X, p 465 ;
 "Brōto Dhāran" (Taking an Oath, 1905)—R. R. III, pp 624-25 ;
 "Dēsh Nāyak" (Country's leader, 1906)—R. R. X, p 493.
72. "Byadhi o pratikār" (Malady and cure, 1907)—R. R. X, p 634.
73. "Subicharer adhikar" (Right to justice, 1894)—R. R. X, p 423 ;
 "Bharatbarshēr itihās" (India's History, 1902)—R. R. IV, p 385 ;
 "University Bill" (1904)—R. R. III, p 598.
74. "Apomānēr prōtikar" (Insult avenged, 1894)—R. R. X, pp 414-15.

compassion for one another. Unity would not lead us to revolution, we have not the strength for that. But unity makes for strength and greatness which is bound to draw respect. We can undo the wrongs done to us only by means of gaining respect.⁷⁵

Concretely, Rabindranath suggested the formation of an indigenous council⁷⁶ working towards unity. What was worse for Rabindranath was that there was no unity between man and man in Indian Society.⁷⁷ It was a society built upon the hierarchy of castes. Rabindranath viewed this historically as the result of a long-drawn war between Aryans and non-Aryans, creating a disparate family of Hindus which included at one extreme Dravidians in the south and at the other the people of Nepal in the Himalayas.⁷⁸ The civilization that survived was seen in the culture of Hinduism which spread into every corner of India through the authority of the Brahmans. Its binding force was in custom, which was placed above the need for national unity.

In our country social-structure is a big thing. It is that which keeps the country together. It has throughout protected and covered up all the wrongs of the people and their limitations.⁷⁹

Hence communities lived in regions, each according to its own particular traditions, met its own needs within the boundaries of the community concerned, and shut out the rest of humanity.⁸⁰ Rabindranath was convinced that this compartmentalization had made for twin evils. One was sectarianism and the absence of national unity. The other evil was the absence of universalism. The Indian National Congress had taken up the cause of national unity but had used

75. "Subicharer adhikar" (Right to justice, 1894)—R. R. X, p 422.

76. "Saphalatār Sadupāy" (Honest way to success, 1904)—R. R. III, p 576.

77. "Prasanga Kathā" (Current topics, 1898)—R. R. X, p 556 ;
 "Swadeshi Samaj" "Parishistha" (Supplementary discussion Society and State, 1904), p 555 ;

"Byadhi o prōtikār" (Malady and cure, 1907)—R. R. pp 628-29.

8. "Bharatbarsher itihās" (India's history, 1902)—R. R. IV, p 382.

79. "Brahman" (Brahmin, 1902)—R. R. IV, pp 388-89.

80. "Prasanga-Kathā" (Current topics, 1998)—R. R. X, pp 558-59.

coercion against its own peoples, lower-caste Hindus or Muslims, in order to make boycott a success.⁸¹

Rabindranath was against this method, as it deepened divisions within the Indian society. Instead of bringing people closer, politicians had used the will towards separation to their advantage. After the outbreak of communal riots in the Swadeshi movement of Bengal, therefore, Rabindranath had no truck with politics.⁸² In India that was Rabindranath's dream there was to be no alienation created either by race as in the past, or by the new colonial context of the educated gentleman tucked away from his lowly countryman. Rabindranath insisted that the time had come to overcome these limitations and open the way to man's fullest development by giving expression to the one truth that could hold men together in a common cause. That was the cause of welfare through which he hoped the Indian would be re-born and find his freedom in the thought that he was first of all an Indian, not Hindu nor Muslim nor Christian, without caste, without distinctions and without hatred, standing in the midst of a vast truth.⁸³ Rabindranath believed that the first task was in building a *mahajati* in our land and then in finding our kinship with the whole of the human race.⁸⁴ But, Rabindranath was a realist, the opposite of a dreamy poet. He expected no miracles to happen. He knew how strong was the will towards separation, he knew that parochialism was a real force in India. Yet he believed that there was, at the turn of the century, a sensitivity over nationhood, that the Renaissance had changed the face of nationalism. He himself had enlisted a few youths who had volunteered to live in the villages and organize the villages.⁸⁵ All he really hoped for was that those who would heed his call would work wherever they were, with whatever resources

81. *Prabasi*, Aswin 1314, p 347 ;

"Path-o-pātheyō" (Ways and Means, 1908)—R. R. X, pp 459-63 ;

"Samasyā" (Problem, 1908)—R. R. X, pp 481-84.

82. Sumit Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal 1903-1908* Op. cit. pp 81-83.

83. *Gorā*, (Whitter 1907-09)—R. R. VI, pp 569-72.

84. "Path-o-pātheyō" (Ways and Means, 1908)—R. R. X, pp 467.

85. Rathindranath Tagore, "Pallier unnati: Pitrismrity", *Rabindrayan* (Calcutta 1368/1957), p 44.

there were, and in contact with the masses.⁸⁶ He felt that was a surer way of uniting with the people than was the struggle against the partition of Bengal.⁸⁷

We have argued that Rabindranath thought consistently of his country's awakening and of reforming his society. This was so ; but Rabindranath's writings have been clearly divided into traditionalist and modernist phases, his thought into traditional and liberal streams. At one level there were contradictions in Rabindranath, but at another level, and looked at through the years too, there was a consistency in his thought. Rabindranath's problem was that he passionately loved his country, yet he did not belong to its orthodoxies. His problem was that he admired Western liberal values, he wished to belong to the world, yet he felt an acute humiliation in the British presence in India. These contradictions which came out of his circumstances created an ambivalence in Rabindranath which shaped his thinking. If Rabindranath supported caste at certain times, he did it partly because he felt uncertain as to what was best for his society and anxious over social harmony, and partly to justify it against the forces of alienation created by the British presence in India. This is why even if we divide Rabindranath into compartments, we find him laying aside what he called the trivialities of Hindu custom on the one hand, and almost in the same breath trying to find meaning in them. Rabindranath knew definitely that caste had created division within Indian society just as much as English education had done. But in his love for his country, in his eagerness to find something to admire in the customs from the past, he upheld even the custom of *sati-daha* because he admired the few who were dying for a passion. In a very real sense, Rabindranath was like his creation 'Gora' who was conforming out of a compulsive devotion to the society he thought he was born into, and not always out of conviction. The conflict was too easily resolved because the contrary conviction was there throughout. This is what makes it possible to see Rabindranath beyond these contradictions, to see him in his consistencies, and to view him as a whole.

86. "Nababarsha" (New Year. 1902)—R. R. IV, p 373 ;

"Bande Mataram, 20 June 1907.

87. "Sapholatār sadupāy" (Honest way to success, 1904)—p 577.

MEDIEVAL INDIAN SOCIETY, STATE AND SOCIAL CUSTOM

—Sati as a Case Study—

SUSHIL CHAUDHURY

An attempt has been made in this paper to analyse the different aspects of Sati as a social institution in medieval India and to make a critical analysis of the attitude of the medieval Indian Society and State towards this social practice. A long-established custom as Sati was, neither the Hindus nor the Muslims found any particular cause to discuss it in details except for occasional reference to it—and that too mostly in admiration for it. The most detailed account of the social custom is, however, to be found in the accounts of the foreign travellers. From these accounts, supplemented by information from indigenous sources, it has been attempted here to identify the main 'homes' of the Sati, to give a detailed description of the process of widow-burning, to expose the role of the Brahmins in the execution of Sati, to explain the main factors—emphasising their relative importance—behind this social practice, and finally to evaluate the attitude of the medieval State and measures taken by it in suppressing the social abuse. It is significant that the Muslim rulers never approved of the inhuman practice though they hardly attempted prohibiting it altogether by legislation. Even when a law was promulgated, though rather very rarely, to ban the social custom, it remained mostly in paper, hardly translated into practice. Nevertheless it must be said in all fairness that it was due to the vigilance of the medieval State that the practice of Sati was abated to a great extent, especially during the Mughal period.

I

Etymologically 'Sati' stands for a chaste, virtuous and faithful wife though curiously enough the term had generally been applied to signify the custom of burning women in the funeral pyre of their dead husbands. Originally 'Sati' was the term used of the woman

and never of the rite ; its application in the latter sense, as done in the present essay, is modern and European.

Although barbarous and inhuman in modern eyes, it seems strange that the practice of widow-sacrifice was almost universal in its prevalence in ancient world. A custom of the Slavs of Europe, it was hardly unknown to the Scandinavian people. Herodotus testifies to its existence among the Scythians and the people of Thrace. In Greek legend Evande, wife of Capaneus, one of the Seven against Thebes, burned alive with her husband. N. M. Penzer suggests that the custom was revived in Egypt under Amenhetop II (accn. 1447 B. C.) whose tomb has in an adjoining chamber to the one in which the King lies four enbalmed bodies of slaughtered wives.¹ Even in the East, in China as for example, widow remarriage was looked upon as an act of immorality and suicide of the widow at the death of her husband was hailed by erection of honorary gates at imperial command. The rite of Sati was also prevalent among the Tongans, Fujians, Maoris and many other African tribes, and the relics of it were found in the funeral custom of some American Indian tribes.² 'In fact', Edward Thompson observes, 'the rite belongs to a barbaric stratum which once overlay the whole world including India'.³

There can be hardly any doubt regarding the prevalence of Sati in India from an early period though there is a controversy amongst scholars as to the exact period of its existence.⁴ In the *Mahabharata* we find the instance of Madri sacrificing her life in the funeral pyre

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1. N. M. Penzer, 'Terminal Essays on Widow Burning', in C. H. Tawney, *Ocean of Story*, Vol. IV, London, 1926.
 2. For evidence of ancient, almost universal, prevalence of Sati, see, Penzer, *op. cit.*, and Edward Thompson, *Suttee—A Historical and Philosophical Enquiry into the Hindu Rite of Widow Burning*, London, 1928.
 3. Edward Thompson, *op. cit.*, p. 26.
 4. Max Muller, *Selected Essays on Language, Mythology and Religion*, Vol. I, London, 332 ff; H. H. Wilson, *Essays and Lectures*, Vol. II, N. Delhi, 1976, pp. 270 ff.; Rajendra Lal Mitra, *Indo Aryans*, London, 1881, pp. 147-55; D. C. Sarkar, *Some Aspects of the Earliest Social History of India*, pp. 82-83; J. B. Chaudhury, 'Widow Burning in Ancient India', *Modern Review*, May 1942.

of her husband.⁵ The practice of Sati was observed by the soldiers of Alexander in the Punjab. One Sicritus spoke of it as specially a custom of the Kshatriyas. Aristobolles was informed that widows sometimes burned themselves with their deceased husbands and those who refused to do so lived under general contempt.⁶ Dr. Smith's suggestion that Sati was a Scythian rite introduced from Central Asia has been rejected by Thompson though it may be probable that the contact with the Scythian invaders of Central Asia reinforced the usage.⁷ The great astronomer Varahamir praises Indian women for adherence to the virtuous practice.⁸ The singular protest against the inhuman sacrifice of widows in ancient India is to be found in a beautiful passage in Banabhatta's *Kadambari*.⁹ Any way Sati can be rightly called a deep rooted and established custom in Indian society. That it was an ancient custom in India is also attested by several foreign travellers who visited India during the medieval period.¹⁰ This fact is also corroborated by historiographies of the period like *Ain-i-Akbari*.¹¹

The act of Sati had two forms—'Sahamarana' or 'dying in company with'; in this case, the woman was burnt with the corpse of the deceased husband. The second was 'Anumarana' or 'dying in accordance with'; here if the husband died at a distance from his wife or in certain cases, as for instance, when the wife was pregnant,

5. *Mahabharata*: *Adiparvam*, Tr. by H. Bhattacharyya, pp. 1332-34.

6. *Cambridge History of India*, Vol. 1, p. 215.

7. V. A. Smith, *Oxford History of India*, p. 665; Edward Thompson, *op. cit.*, pp. 20-24.

8. P. N. Bose, *Hindu Civilization under British Rule*, Vol. II, Calcutta, 1898, p. 67.

9. Banabhatta, *Kadambari*—*Purba Bhaga*, Tr. by, Probodendu Sarkar, 2nd edr. p. 145.

10. S. N. Sen, ed., *Indian Travels of Thevenot and Careri*, New Delhi, 1949, p. 250; R. C. Temple, ed., *The Travels of Peter Mundy*, Vol. 2, London, 1914, p. 35; Tavernier, *Travels in India*, London, 1889, Tr. by V. Ball, Vol. 2, p. 406; W. Foster, ed., *Early Travels in India*, Oxford, 1921 (Whithington), p. 221.

11. Abul Fazl, *Ain-i-Akbari*, Tr. by Jarrett, Calcutta, 1948, p. 398.

she was burnt later with some article that belonged to her husband.¹² These two forms of Sati were also sometimes called 'Sahagamana' or 'going along with' and 'Anugamana' or 'going in accordance with' respectively.

II

It seems strange that if one wants to collect materials on different aspects of Sati in medieval Indian writings, one would search almost in vain for these in contemporary Indian authors. Most of them pass over it without much comments. The Muslims who could have perhaps taken a healthier and more detached view of the situation found no particular cause for complaint in the suppression of human personality through this glaring social evil. It seems that the custom had become the normal feature of the social organism in the eyes of both Hindus and Muslims. Hence they fight shy of giving important details about the rite of Sati besides occasional reference to or admiration for it.¹³ But the practice was so widely prevalent in medieval India as not escape the eyes of the shrewd foreign travellers who poured into India in great numbers during this period. So naturally for our detailed knowledge of Sati and its various social aspects, we are largely to depend on the accounts of these foreign travellers, of course with necessary caution required for handling such materials.

Although the practice of Sati was more or less prevalent in almost all parts of medieval India, the main homes of it were however the Ganges Valley, the Punjab and Rajasthan in the North, and Madura and Vijaynagar in the South. Thompson holds that the custom was non-existent in Malabar but we find at least one traveller Friar Odoric (c 1321-22 A. D.) noticed it as a peculiar custom of the

12. *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 323. 'A pregnant woman is not suffered to be burnt till after delivery. If the man dies on the journey, his wives burn themselves with his garment or whatever else may belong to him'.

13. For example, see what Malik Muhammed Jaisi writes: 'Whosoever in life is burnt with passion for the beloved finds delight in death, being seated along with him'. *c. f.*, *Padmavati*, tr. by A. G. Shirref, p. 369, canto 57, para 2. Medieval Bengali literature is full of glowing references to Sati, *c. f.*, f. n. 15.

Indians of Quilon on the Malabar coast, where women with sons were exempted from burning.¹⁴ In Bengal the rite of Sati became widely prevalent at least from the 12th century A. D. Medieval Bengali literature is full of glowing references to Sati. In the Songs of Manik Chandra Raja, composed probably in the 11-12th centuries, we find a description of Queen Maynamati ascending the funeral pyre of her husband. Similar references to Sati are also to be found in Narayan Deva's 'Manasamangala' (13th Century), Mukundaram's 'Chandimangala' (16th Century), Dwija Madhava's 'Mangal Chandeer Geet' and 'Chandimangala' (16th) Ketakdas-Kshemananda's 'Manasamangala' (17th), Ghanaram Chakraborty's 'Dharmamangala' (18th) and Bharatchandra's 'Annadamangala' (18th).¹⁵

The detailed account of a wife sacrificing her life in the pyre of her defunct husband can be gleaned from the writings of several travellers. Inhuman and barbarous as the process was, its accounts are somewhat prosaic. Sometimes it was elaborate and picturesque and also attended with wedding-like grandeur. However the manner of burning varied in minute details in different parts of the country. Ibn Batuta leaves an account of three wives performing the rite at Amjeri (Amjhera lay in Malwa near Dhar).¹⁶ They passed three days preceding the burning—eating, drinking amidst music and joys, as if they wished to bid the world good bye.¹⁷ In the morning of the fourth day each was brought a horse which she mounted—

14. Yule and Cordier, *Cathay and the Way Thither*, Vol. II, London, 1916, p. 139.

15. Mukundaram, *Kavikankan Chandi*, (C. U. pt. 1, p. 160); Dwija Madhava, *Mangal Chandeer Geet*, (C. U., ed. Sudhibhushan Bhattacharyya, pp. 42, 111, 114), *Gangamangala* (Sahitya Parishad edn., p. 98); Ghanaram Chakraborty, *Dharmamangala* (Bangabasi Press, 3rd edn. pp. 181, 184, 195-97). Here the four wives of Lausen became ready to burn themselves on the receipt of the tragic news of their husband's death. But the news proved to be false, and hence they abandoned the idea (pp. 195-97). Ketak-Kshemananda, *Manasamangal*, (C. U. pp. 32-36); *Bharat Chandra Granthabali*, (Basumati edn., pp. 17, 22, 136).

16. *The Rehala of Ibn Batuta*, Tr. & ed., Mahdi Husain, Baroda, 1953, pp. 21-23.

17. Three days of grace is also referred to by Manucci, *c. f. Storia-do-Mogor*, Vol. 3, tr. W. Irvine, London, 1908, p. 65.

adorned and perfumed. In general cases however the woman, on hearing the news of her husband's death, first took a bath and then dressed herself 'in the same measure and strain she was occasioned at wedding'.¹⁸ Pelsaert observes : 'She puts on her finest clothes, her jewels and the best ornaments she has, adorning herself as if it was her wedding day'.¹⁹ A procession was soon formed to conduct her to the place of cremation. The Brahmin stood around her, relatives accompanied and they showered on her profuse greetings on the glorious fortune that attended her. The procession, far from being gloomy, wore a joyous and triumphant look with drums beating and flutes playing in front of it.²⁰

On arriving at the destination the widow removed her clothes etc. and wore a coarse cotton cloth which was unsewn and prepared herself to enter into the pyre. This funeral pyre, usually on the bank of a river or pond, made of wood which was mingled with oil and other combustibles to make it burn vehemently, was usually several feet high.²¹ Tavernier found in the kingdom of Gujarat and as far as Agra and Delhi, women being burnt in little huts while all along the coast of Coromandel people made 'a great hole in the ground nine or ten feet deep, and twenty five or thirty feet square into which they throw a great quantity of wood and dungs to make the fire burn more fiercely'.²² The woman would mount to the top of the pyre (or would place herself in the middle of the hut or in the pit as the case might be) closely embracing her dead husband : at once relatives would bind her feet strongly by two ropes to two

18. Pero Tafur, *Travels and Adventures*, tr. & ed., Malcolm Letts, London, 1926, p. 90 ; N. Conti in R. H. Major, *India in the 15th Century*, p. 24 ; Tavernier, *op. cit.*, p. 407, *Storia, op. cit.*, Vol. 3, pp. 65, 66, 156 ; W. H. Moreland, *Relations of Golconda in the Early 17th Century*, London, 1931, p. 28 (Methwold) ; S. N. Sen, ed., *Indian Travels etc., op. cit.* p. 211.

19. Pelsaert, *The Remonstrantie or Jahangir's India*, Tr. Moreland & Geyl, Camb. 1925, p. 79.

20. *Rehala*, p. 22 ; Tavernier, *op. cit.*, p. 407 ; *Travels of Thevenot & Careri, op. cit.*, p. 211. Foster, *Early Travels*, p. 219 ; Major, *op. cit.*, p. 24, Pero Tafur, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

21. *Rehala*, p. 22 ; Tavernier, p. 408 ; Moreland, *Relations, op. cit.*, p. 74.

22. Tavernier, *op. cit.*, p. 411.

posts driven into the ground for the purpose.²³ Next they would throw some more wood and dried cowdung on the two bodies. When the widow was placed in the hut, she was in a half lying down posture, leaving her head upon a kind of wooden bolster and resting her back against a wooden pillar, to which the Brahmins would tie her about the middle, for fear she would run away.²⁴ In this posture she held the dead body of her husband. Sometimes the widow would plunge herself into the funeral flames of her husband. In these cases usually a screen was put before the fire to conceal it from the woman and the public view.²⁵ Suddenly the widow cast herself into the flames. Just at that moment a clamorous noise of the crowd mingled with the sounds of drums and gongs would be raised—obviously to distract the attention of the people from the horror of the scene. In this tremendous noise the screeches and cries of agony of the poor creatures were drowned, where the burners would skillfully force them to lie down by thrusting with poles at them.²⁶ In some parts of India, especially in the South, women were buried alive with their defunct husband. Sometimes these women were buried only up to the throat and then the Brahmins would suddenly wring her neck and strangle her to death, and then cover the body with earth.²⁷

III

It is curious to note that inspite of the 'barbarous inhumanity in the whole process of Sati, most of the foreign travellers are

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23. F. Bernier, *Travels in the Mogul Empire*, 1656-1668, ed. Constable, London, 1916, p. 314 ; *Indian Travels etc.*, ed. S. N. Sen, op. cit., p. 212 ; *Storia*, op. cit., Vol. 3, pp 59-60. Moreland, *Relations etc.*, op. cit., p. 74.
 24. Tavernier, *Travels*, op. cit., pp. 408-9 ; Della Velle, *The Travels of ...*, ed. Grey, Vol. 1, London 1892, p. 84.
 25. *Rehala*, op. cit., p. 22 ; *Storia*, op. cit., Vol. 3, p. 66.
 26. *Rehala*, op. cit., p. 23 ; Foster, *Early Travels*, op. cit., (Terry), p. 323 ; Peter Mundy, *The Travels of ...*, ed. R. C. Temple, London 1914, p 36 ; *Storia*, Vol 3, p. 66.
 27. Tavernier, op. cit., p. 411 ; Bernier, op. cit., p. 315 ; *Indian Travels etc.*, ed. S. N. Sen, p. 120 ; D. Barbossa, *The Book of . . .*, Vol. 1, Tr. Danes, London, 1921, p. 222.

eloquent in narrating that all this was carried out with much joy and animation. Without any movement, with little lamentation but strong determination, without tears, nay, on the contrary, radiant and joyous, the widows burnt themselves with their husbands' bodies in their arms.²⁸ Bernier writes in utter astonishment :

'I cannot hope to give you an adequate conception of the fortitude displayed by these infatuated victims during the whole of the frightfull tragedy : it must be seen to be believed'.²⁹ Further he adds : 'I do not expect with my limited powers of expression to convey a full idea of the brutish boldness, or ferocious gaiety depicted on the woman's countenance ; of her undaunted step ; of the freedom of perturbation with which she conversed ... of her easy air, free from dejection'.³⁰ But at the same time it is true that some of the widows either shrank or was stupefied in terror at the sight of the piled wood or fire.³¹ At Lahore Bernier found that 'a poor little creature appeared more dead than alive when she approached the dreadful pit'.³²

The extraordinary confidence and cheerfulness of the widows in facing the horrible tragedy made some foreign travellers suspicious and even incline to believe that the former had dulled their senses with a dose of opium or other narcotics. After a careful reading of these accounts, it can be asserted with little doubt that the widows were in some cases even drugged and narcotized so that they became 'Satis' while unaware of what they were doing. It has been reported that the Brahmins and sometimes relations provided them with bhang (hemp), opium, datura and such like which

28. Pelsaert *op. cit.*, p. 79. *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe to India*, ed., Foster, pp. 105, 271 ; Bernier, *op. cit.*, pp. 309-10 ; Ovington, *A Voyage to Surat*, ed. Rawlinson, London, 1929, p. 190 ; *Padmavati*, *op. cit.*, pp. 369-70 ; *Storia*, Vol. 3, pp. 59-60, 156.

29. Bernier, *op. cit.*, p. 309.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 312.

31. Major, *op. cit.*, p. 24 ; *Storia*, Vol. 3, p. 156 ; Bernier, *op. cit.*, p. 313.

32. Bernier, *op. cit.*, p. 314.

stupefied them.³³ Manucci gives us an interesting story how a woman—a victim of sorcery—became eager, ardent and mad demanding that the authorities put no hindrance in her way to 'Sati'. This happened in Vijagapatnam, where Mr. Holcombe (1698-1705) was governor. When the woman in question appeared in his presence, he noticed that she seemed to have abandoned her feminine nature. He entreated her in the cause of humanity and even promised to support her for the rest of her life but only in vain. Then he spoke secretly to a Brahmin who accompanied her, promising him a sum of money if he removed the apprehensions that possessed the woman. If he did not effect this, the governor threatened, he would have to burn alongside of her and also the rest of the Brahmins accompanying the widow. The Brahmins for fear of life on the one hand and temptation of money on the other went behind the woman and gently touched her clothes at the back with their fingers. Immediately she changed her colour totally and raising her hands to her face and drooping her head in a shamefaced way went back to her house.³⁴ But perhaps drugging was not general; in some parts e.g. in Bengal it was common enough, while in other parts e. g. in Rajputana, it was an exception though not very rare.

One cannot but shudder in horror to learn that sometimes very young girls even were the victims of the 'wicked unmerciful custom'. The most lamentable case is the one cited by Nicholas Withington where the girl was not 'above ten years of age.'³⁵ Bernier found at Lahore a 'young woman of 12' who was the prey of this social evil.³⁶ Jahangir also refers to a case in Rajaur where a girl of 12 had buried herself alive with her dead husband.³⁷

33. Della Valle, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 85; *Storia*, Vol. 3, pp. 156-57; Mandelslo, *Voyages and Travels into the East Indias*, Tr. Davies, London 1669, p. 31; *John Marshall in India, Notes and Observations in Bengal, 1668-1672*, ed. S. A. Khan, London, 1927, p. 384; Fryer, *East India and Persia*, Vol. 1, London, 1909, p. 96.

34. *Storia*, *op. cit.*, Vol. 3, p. 157.

35. *Early Travels*, ed. Foster, *op. cit.*, p. 219.

36. Bernier, *op. cit.*, p. 314.

37. Elliot and Dowson, *History of India as Told by Its own Historians*, Vol. 6, London, 1877, p. 376.

IV

The practice of Sati though not conspicuously absent among lower orders of the society was certainly more prevalent in the upper strata. Della Valle observes : 'Tis most usual among great persons who prize Reputation at a higher rate than others do.'³⁸ Manucci found that among the 'caste of the Rajahs' it was imperative that on the husband's death, the wife burnt alive with his body,³⁹ a fact which Al-Beruni noted in his writings at a much earlier period.⁴⁰

As to the number of wives being burnt with the dead husband's body, Della Valle informs us he had heard that on one occasion seventeen wives were burnt while Manucci noted that the 'women sacrificed are commonly fifteen, twenty or even thirty in number'.⁴¹ In Tod's *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, we find instances where a large number of wives sacrificed their lives in the funeral pyre of their husbands. But Satis of Rajasthan sink into insignificance beside those recorded by trustworthy authorities for some South Indian states especially Vijaynagar in the 14th, 15th, and 16th centuries. Though the report of the Portuguese missionaries that eleven thousand women sacrificed their lives on the death of a South Indian Raja seems to be an utter exaggeration, it was customary in Vijaynagar to burn two or three thousand wives in the flames of a Raja's pyre. Teixeira writes in 1611 : 'When I was in India, on the death of a Naique of Maduré, a country situated between that of Malabar and that of Choromandel, four hundred wives of his burned themselves along with him.'⁴²

We read in Nicholo Conti a peculiar system, though difficult to believe but not certainly a concoction of his, that in Vijaynagar and Central India, women were married under the express agreement that they should add to the splendour of the funeral ceremony of

38. Della Velle, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 84.

39. Storia, *op. cit.*, Vol. 3, p. 65.

40. Sachau, ed., *Al-Beruni's India*, Vol. II, 1888, p. 155.

41. Della Velle, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 84 ; *Storia, op. cit.*, Vol. 3, p. 156.

42. Quoted in Hobson-Jobson, article 'Suttee', p. 881.

their husbands by casting themselves into the flames.⁴³ In Vijaynagar, as the Italian traveller asserts, two or three thousand were selected as the King's wives on condition that they should voluntarily burn themselves with him.⁴⁴ Sometime women slaves also threw themselves into the flames after their mistresses.⁴⁵ We read that even betrothed girls and wives who had 'never layen with husbands' sacrificed their lives without any legal or social obligation.⁴⁶ Al-Beruni tells us that women of advanced years and with children were not made victims of the inexorable practice of Sati.⁴⁷ Friar Odoric (c 1321-22) found in Quilon on the Malabar Coast and Careri in Rajputana that women with sons were exempted from the process of self-immolation.⁴⁸ Similarly the accounts of Jahangir, Tavernier, John Marshall and Manucci clearly assert that women with children enjoyed exemption from Sati.⁴⁹ If this was the general practice, there were exceptions too as Pelsaert found a widow sacrificing her life who left behind her year-old baby while an anonymous Dutch writer recorded a case of Sati who left behind her three months old baby.⁵⁰

V

Most of the foreign travellers express in unequivocal terms the inglorious part played by the Brahmins in the execution of Sati. As the custodian of society, the priestly class accompanied the widow, exhorted her to give public testimonials of her constancy and courage, and as some travellers pointed out, even gave her a

43. Major, *op. cit.*, pp. 6, 24.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

45. S. N. Sen, ed., *Indian Travels of ...*, *op. cit.*, p. 120; Bernier, *op. cit.*, p. 310.

46. Foster ed., *Early Travels*, *op. cit.*, p. 219; Waqiat-i-Mustaqi' quoted in K. M. Ashraf, *Life and Condition of the People of Hindusthan*, Delhi, 1970, p. 190, f.n. 3.

47. Sachau, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, p. 155.

48. Yule and Cordier, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, p. 139.

49. *Jahangir's Memories*, S. Gupta edn., p. 77; Tavernier, *op. cit.*, 406; *John Marshall in India*, *op. cit.*, p. 384; *Storia*, Vol. 3, p. 156.

50. *Remonstrantie*, *op. cit.*, p. 80; *Relations etc.* *op. cit.*, p. 74.

certain beverage to stupefy and disorder her senses.⁵¹ We have already noted Manucci's account of sorcery being applied on a woman by the Brahmins in Vijagapatnam. The Brahmins had also material interest in encouraging and executing the custom inasmuch as the ornaments of the widow (she would wear all her ornaments at the time) would become invaluable 'free booty' of the Brahmins who had the monopoly right to search for them in the ashes.⁵² Of course it must be noted that some travellers, e. g. Ibn Batuta and Pyrard de Laval, held that the widows would distribute ornaments as alms and gifts 'to whom they will' before casting themselves into the funeral flames'.⁵³ But this does hardly minimise the inglorious role of the Brahmins. The active role played by the Brahmins in the process of Sati incensed Tavernier so much as to say : 'It is for the Brahmin's interest that the poor miserable creatures continue their resolutions'.⁵⁴ Bernier became so much irritated that he referred to the priestly class as 'merciless Brahmins' and wrote : '... those demons excite or astound the affrighted victims.'⁵⁵

A very fundamental question regarding the practice of Sati in medieval India is whether it was voluntary or obligatory, whether the widows willingly sacrificed their lives or were forced to do it. The contradictory evidence furnished by foreign travellers make it a bit difficult for us to pronounce a definite answer on this point. Sometime we find even contradictory statements in the account of the same traveller. Della Valle for example at one place categorically points out (of course on second hand information as he frankly says that he had never seen any woman burnt alive) that the burning of women upon the death of their husbands is 'at their own choice to do it or not', while at some other place he says that he had heard some women 'are burnt against their own will'.⁵⁶ Ibn Batuta,

51. Tavernier, *op. cit.*, p. 408 ; Major, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

52. S. N. Sen, ed., *Indian Travels etc.*, p. 120, 212, 250 ; Tavernier, *op. cit.*, p. 408 ; Ovington, *op. cit.*, p. 201.

53. *Rehala*, p. 22 ; *Voyages of Pyrard de Laval*, Tr. by Grey, Vol. 1, London, 1889, p. 378.

54. Tavernier, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, p. 408.

55. Bernier, *op. cit.*, p. 313.

56. Della Valle, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 84.

Terry and Pelsaert emphatically states that Sati was voluntary, not obligatory, no compulsion was attached to it.⁵⁷ Sidi Ali Reis and others assert that in Mohammedan territories no force or violence was resorted to in Sati.⁵⁸ But in *Akbarnama* we find reference to unwilling and forcefull Sati in the days of Akbar, while *Ain* refers to Sati as 'ancient custom in Hindustan for women to burn herself however unwilling she may be'.⁵⁹ According to Al-Beruni, in case of wives of kings, they were to burn themselves whether they wished it or not while Careri says that in Rajputana unwilling wives with no male issue were burnt by force.⁶⁰ Both Della Valle and Manucci refer to force being applied by relatives, and Whithington observes that 'only the widow's own kindred, not her husband's', force her to burn herself, 'houldinge it a great disgrace to their familie if she should denye to be burned'.⁶¹ Sometimes even Brahmins would push the reluctant widow to fire by force.⁶² The Indians however never disclosed to foreign travellers that force was applied in Sati and the only confession made to Della Valle was that generally it was not so ; only when the widow was young and handsome, force was resorted to.⁶³

In the face of the evidence already examined, perhaps it can be safely concluded that Sati was obligatory in some parts of India and in certain cases force accompanied it, though in some parts (e.g in Rajputana) ladies burned more willingly than in other parts of India. Della Valle seems to reveal the exact picture when he says : 'tis possible too that many widows, being in the height of their

57. *Rehala*, *op. cit.*, p. 22 ; *Early Travels*, *op. cit.*, p. 323 ; *Remonstrantie*, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

58. *Travels and Adventures of Sidi Ali Reis*, Tr. by Vambéry, London, 1899, p. 60, Della Valle, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 85 ; *Rehala*, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-22.

59. Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, Tr. by Beveridge, Vol. 3, Calcutta, 1939, p. 595 ; *Ain-i-Akbari*, *op. cit.*, Vol. 3, p. 398.

60. Sachau, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, p. 155 ; S. N. Sen, ed., *Indian Travels etc.*, p. 255.

61. Della Valle, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 85 ; *Storia*, *op. cit.*, Vol. 3, p. 65 ; *Early Travels*, ed. Foster, *op. cit.*, p. 220.

62. Tavernier, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, p. 411.

63. Della Valle, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 85.

passion taken at their word by their kindred who desire it, go to it afterwards with an ill will, not daring to deny those that exhort them there unto, especially if oblig'd by their word, nor to discover their own mind freely to governour ; things which amongst women, with their natural fearfulness and modesty easily happen ...'⁶⁴ Once the widow had announced her resolution, no after hesitation or terror would excuse her ; die she must, however weak and miserable she was. On the whole we can agree with Abul Fazl who divides Sati into different categories—those who out of sheer love for husbands consign themselves into flames ; those who from fear of reproach surrender to be burnt ; others who were swayed by family considerations and customs, and finally who were actually forced to burn themselves with their deceased husbands.⁶⁵

VI

To a critical observer a very pertinent question regarding the rite of Sati is the reasons behind it. One must try to find out the actual religious, social and economic factors responsible for this inhuman social custom. The Greeks who found Sati in vogue in the Punjab during the 4th century B. C. advanced a theory to account for the custom. According to them, once upon a time 'women had been so apt to get rid of their husbands by poison that the law had to be introduced, which compelled a widow to be burnt with their husbands'.⁶⁶ The libidinous disposition of a woman as a reason for social sanction behind Sati is advanced by some of the foreign travellers too.⁶⁷ But this seems to be too superficial a reason to account for such a social custom. A Hindu woman who obviously knew the ascetic rigours of a widow's life would hardly dare poison her husband and thus welcome the miserable lot of a widow. The most important factor which urged a woman to embrace the funeral flames ungrudgingly on most occasion was the extreme misery of the widow in the then society. Widow-remarriage was not permitted

64. *Ibid.*

65. *Ain-i-Akbari*, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, p. 322.

66. *Cambridge History of India*, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 415.

67. *Early Travels*, *op. cit.*, (Whithington) p. 221 ; Ovington, *op. cit.*, p. 201 ; Bernier, *op. cit.*, p. 311 ; *Relations*, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

by the rigorous society⁶⁸ and if one married, she had to forsake her religion and accept Christianity or Islam.⁶⁹

We find a glaring picture of the inhuman treatment and persecution of the widows in most of the foreign travellers of the period as also in some indigenous writers.⁷⁰ A widow had to live the rest of her life 'slighted and despised and in a worse condition than a slave in the very house where she was mistress before'. This pathetic condition would take away all charms and flavour of life from them so that they rather chose to be burnt in the funeral pyre of their husbands rather than to live in the scorn and contempt of the world. The attitude of medieval Hindu society towards womanhood is best reflected in Ghanaram Chakraborty's *Dharmamangal* where it has been said that the 'life of a young woman without husband is futile and contemptible'.⁷¹ Under the circumstances it was natural for a widow to lament : 'What use to live, nay rather be born/To live the target of a dull world's scorn ?'⁷² It was probable that anticipating the miserable prospect of a widow's life, the woman could not think at the moment of her deepest sorrow that she would be able to live without her husband and so had recourse to self-immolation. Widowhood was an experience so desolate and crammed with misery that it was preferable for a woman to perish in the flames that consumed her husband's corpse.

Secondly there was tremendous and almost irresistible inducement of religion and tradition which gave stimulus to the institution of Sati in medieval India. Some of the travellers emphatically asserted that the abominable practice was the effect of early and deeply rooted prejudice. Whenever these travellers asked the Indians the

68. Bernier, *op. cit.*, p. 155 ; *Storia, op. cit.*, Vol. 3, p. 59 ; S. N. Sen, ed., *Indian Travels ... , op. cit.*, p. 119.

69. *Ibid.*, p. 119.

70. Bernier, *op. cit.*, p. 155 ; Tavernier, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, p. 406 ; S. N. Sen, ed., *Indian Travels ... , op. cit.*, p. 119 ; *Rehala, op. cit.*, p. 22 ; *Ain-i-Akbari, op. cit.*, Vol. 3, p. 323.

71. *Dharmamangala, op. cit.*, p. 188 ; 'Pati bina jubati janam etopat'.

72. L. C. Crump, *Lady of the Lotus—Rupamati of Ahmad-al-Umari*, Oxford, 1928, p. 82.

reason of Sati, 'they alleged none but ancient custom'.⁷³ The belief was sought to be inculcated in every girl from her very childhood that it was virtuous and laudable in a wife to mingle her ashes with those of her husband's and that no woman of honour would 'refuse compliance with the established custom'.⁷⁴ The widows were led to believe that Sati would enable them to enjoy eternal bliss in the next world in the company of their husbands. Manucci states that the Hindus believed in the reincarnation of a 'Sati' as goddess in heaven, while Tavernier tells us that 'dying after that manner, they shall revive again with him in another world with more honour and advantage than that they enjoyed before and the priests flatter them with a hope that while they are in the midst of the flames, Ram will appear and reveal wonderful visions to them before they expire'.⁷⁵ The *Brihad-dharma Purana*, written between 12th and 14th century recommends the practice in the following words : 'A devoted wife, who follows her husband in death, saves him from great sins. Oh twice-born, there is no greater exploit for women, because (by this) she enjoys in heaven the company of her husband for a *manvantara*'.⁷⁶ Even Malik Muhammed Jaisi says in *Padmavati* that the two queens, Nagamati and Padmavati, 'seated themselves on the bier and Paradise appeared before their eyes'.⁷⁷ The hypnotic inducement behind Sati is nicely reflected in a medieval Bengali poet who says that 'a woman who burns herself with her dead husband lives in heaven for eighty million years'.⁷⁸ Moreover it was proclaimed that a 'Sati' in future birth returns not to female sex which was regarded as a curse in the then society.⁷⁹

73. Bernier, *op. cit.*, p. 310 ; S. N. Sen, ed., *Indian Travels ...*, *op. cit.*, p. 119 (Thevenot) p. 250 (Careri).

74. Ovington, *op. cit.*, p. 190 ; Bernier, *op. cit.*, p. 310.

75. *Storia*, *op. cit.*, Vol. 3, p. 66 ; Tavernier, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, p. 406 ; Major, *op. cit.*, p. 24 (Nicholo Conti).

76. R. C. Majumdar, ed., *History of Bengal*, Vol. 1, Dacca University, p. 611.

77. *Padmavati*, *op. cit.*, pp. 369-70, Canto 57, para 2.

78. Dwijamadhava, *Gangamangala*, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

Swami sange anumrita haya jei nari,
aut kauti batsare sei thake sargapuri.

79. *Dabistan*, II, pp. 75-76, quoted in Hobson Jobson, article 'Suttee'.

Thirdly the question of family prestige and personal glory also weighed heavily in the mind of a widow and induced her to burn herself. She knew that her tragic act would not only glorify her and register her name in books for noble and laudable acts but add prestige and honour to her family and her kindreds. Perhaps that was the reason why sometimes force was resorted to, as has been noted earlier, especially by her own kindreds against an unwilling widow. The refusal of a widow to burn herself was an index of want of fidelity and truthfulness on her part and a great disgrace on the part of her own family. So to save their prestige, the widow's own relations would hardly hesitate to employ force and to throw her into the flames. Pero Tafur informs us that a woman escaped to Babylonia because of social hatred and family persecution following her refusal to be a 'Sati'.⁸⁰ Hence it is no wonder that many widows preferred to be Satis on consideration that it would redound to the honour and conduce to the happiness of their family.

Besides these there were certain other factors which account for Sati in medieval India. According to some sociologists and historians Sati was the outcome of the primitive belief that life after death is more or less a continuation of the present life, with the same material needs and hence a man needs his wife in the next world. Sati was really 'for the aggrandisement of the husband who took with him when he died the most valuable and personal of his possessions'.⁸¹ This property sense was more developed in the upper strata of the society and so 'Sati was an appanage of rank'. In addition to the property sense there was possible jealousy which made an old man unwilling that a young or lovely woman would survive him.⁸² It has been argued by some scholars that the sacrifice was more often designed to secure the 'temporal good of the survivors than the spiritual welfare of the sufferer or her husband'.⁸³ But it seems that the main sources of encouragement lay deeper than greed; the rigours of widowhood, the induce-

80. Pero Tafur, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

81. E. Thompson, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

82. *Ibid.*, p. 47.

83. *Calcutta Review*, 1867, Vol. XLVI, article 'Suttee'.

ment of religion and tradition, and the question of family prestige impelled a woman to become a Sati. Though Pelsaert believed that the sordid 'deed was done...out of sheer love' and though it had been reported to Bernier by people that an excess of love was the cause of Sati,⁸⁴ yet one can hardly believe that a widow would perish herself in such a miserable way only out of sheer love for her husband. We do not however make out a case that the devotion of a Hindu wife was uniformly absent in every case. Though such instances were not extremely rare, they are too few to lead to any generalisation. In fact, about the performance of Sati, there was so much pomp and noise of applause, and about the memory of one such praise and exaltation, that often 'a psychological intoxication upheld her till she had passed the reach of succor'.

VII

Irresistible though is the curiosity of a critical student studying the different aspects of Sati in medieval India as to the attitude of the Muslim State during the Sultanate period towards Sati, he is bound to be disappointed at the paucity of materials on this aspect. However in the absence of any direct evidence one is left to conjecture, reasonably it seems, that the Delhi Sultans though not exactly indifferent, tactfully avoided interference in the established custom of the newly conquered country. Muhammed Bin Tughlaq was perhaps the first Muslim king of India who raised his voice against the abominable practice of burning widows in the funeral pyre of their husbands. Ibn Batuta informs us that the Sultan had made it compulsory to obtain a license or permission to burn the widow.⁸⁵ The idea seems to have been to discourage and eliminate the use of force and social pressure. But generally the licence was issued as a matter of course.⁸⁶

So during the Sultanate period one fails to find any direct state measure against Sati beyond the system of official permits. It was

84. *Remonstrantie*, *op. cit.*, p. 80 ; Bernier, *op. cit.*, p. 310.

85. *Rehala*, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

86. K. M. Ashraf, *op. cit.*, p. 191

the second Mughal emperor Humayun who took a bold step against Sati and tried to extirpate it altogether. He extended an absolute prohibition to all cases where a widow was past the age of child bearing, even if she offered herself willingly. Curiously enough the Hindu priests or laity made no violent protest or demonstration against this. But strangely enough, the God-fearing monarch soon cancelled his orders after a second thought. He thought that interference and forcible prevention of the 'hallowed custom and religious practice' of the Hindus was sure to arouse the wrath of God and bring about the downfall of his dynasty, and perhaps even his own death. The ordinary rule—the system of official permit for burning a widow—however remained in force. Sidi Ali Reis reports that officers of the Padishah were present on such occasions to prevent any act of violence and compulsion being brought to bear on the reluctant or refusing widow.⁸⁷

Though it may be doubted whether Akbar contemplated any general prohibition of Sati, it is certain that he endeavoured to prevent forceful Sati in his kingdom. His edict banning Sati runs thus : 'If a Hindu woman wished to be burnt with husband, they should not prevent her ; but she should not be forced against her will'.⁸⁸ In the *Ain-i-Akbari* we find his instruction to the Kotwal : 'He should not suffer a woman to be burnt against her inclination'.⁸⁹ Further his attempts to check the indiscriminate self-immolation of widows became more laudable when we find, as informed by the *Akbarnama*, that vigilant and truthful men had been appointed in every city and district in order that the two classes of cases might be continually kept distinct and that forcible burning might not be permitted.⁹⁰ The emperor was reported to have interfered personally in some cases and stopped widows from burning themselves.⁹¹ But relying on these few cases where Akbar interfered possibly more on personal grounds than any other, it is

87. Sidi Ali Reis, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

88. Badaoni, *Mutakhwab-ut-Tawarikh*, Tr. Lowe, Vol. 2, p. 388.

89. *Ain-i-Akbari*, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, p. 45.

90. *Akbarnama*, *op. cit.*, Vol. 3, p. 595

91. *Ibid.*, Vol. 3, p. 595.

difficult to infer that he pursued a general policy of total prohibition of Sati.

Jahangir not only followed in the footsteps of his father, but even went farther. In his memoir, *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri* we find an order which not only prohibited Sati and infanticide but even enjoined punishment for its infraction.⁹² But as the accounts of foreign travellers refer to many cases of Sati in Jahangir's India, it seems that the prohibition was only in paper and never strictly enforced, though however as in the previous reigns, no widow could be burnt without royal permission. The governors, as Pelsaert informs us, were not permitted by king's orders to refuse permission. Yet they endeavoured by various means, sometimes even by offer of 'enticing promises', to prevent self-immolation by widows but in most cases only in vain.⁹³ Even Jahangir himself, as Hawkins tells us, was reluctantly compelled to give leave for burning a widow in Agra.⁹⁴

Shah Jahan faithfully pursued the policy of his predecessors towards Sati. 'The Mogul', writes Peter Mundy, 'hath almost abolished that custom so that it may not be done without special license from the King or governor of the place where they dwell'.⁹⁵ These governors, as Tavernier points out, 'who being a Mohometan and abhorring that execrable custom of self murder are very shy to permit them'.⁹⁶ Shah Jahan is even credited with prohibiting women with children from burning themselves who were commanded to live for the education of their children.⁹⁷

Aurangzeb, if Manucci is taken into confidence, issued an order after his return from Kashmir in 1663 prohibiting totally the sacrifice of widows in the Mughal empire.⁹⁸ Though this humanitarian rule

92. *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, Elliot and Dowson, Vol. 6, p. 376.

93. *Remonstrantie*, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

94. *Early Travels*, ed. Foster, *op.* 119.

95. Richard Temple, ed., *The Travels of Peter Mundy*, London, 1914, Vol. 2, p. 85.

96. Tavernier, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, p. 407.

97. *Ibid.*

98. *Storia*, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, p. 97.

is not to be found in the formal histories, it is mentioned in the official guide books of the reign.⁹⁹ But despite this order, as evidence of foreign travellers indicate, Aurangzeb hardly succeeded in suppressing Sati altogether. Yet this much is certain that through orders to his governors to employ all their care in suppressing the abuse, he made performance of Sati difficult and thus saved a great many women from the utter tragedy. Both Thevenot and Careri testify to the strong vigilance employed by his governors to prevent the large scale slaughter of women at the altar of their dead husbands.¹⁰⁰

On the whole it can be safely asserted that the Mughal emperors and their officers viewed the right of Sati with unconcealed disfavour and tried their best to prevent it by pursuasion if possible. If they did not forbid it altogether by strict enforcement of legal measures, they must have been influenced by the same considerations as actuated the early Governor Generals of the East India Company who hesitated to interfere with a social evil sanctioned by old tradition and long standing custom. The somewhat reluctant attitude of the Mughals towards wholesale prohibition of Sati is well appreciated by Bernier who writes : 'They do not indeed forbid it by a positive law because it is a part of their policy to have the idolatrous population which is so much more numerous than their own in the free exercise of its religion'.¹⁰¹ It can be established beyond any shade of doubt on the authority of foreign travellers that the practice of Sati was checked to a great extent under the Mughals by indirect means which we have already examined. But at the same time it is true that sometimes the eager aspirants to Sati and their relatives would buy off the permission from the governors and other authorities with costly presents, ready money and great solicitations.¹⁰² Still it can be maintained that the earnest vigilance of the Mughal emperors and their officers succeeded in reducing the number

99. J. N. Sarkar, *History of Aurangzeb*, Vol. 3, p. 104.

100. S. N. Sen, ed., *Indian Travels ...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 120, 250.

101. Bernier, *op. cit.*, p. 306.

102. *Early Travels*, *op. cit.*, p. 219 ; Tavernier, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, p. 407 ; S. N. Sen, ed., *Indian Travels ...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 120, 211, 250, Ovington, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

of Satis during the Mughal rule, a fact loudly proclaimed by most of the travellers of the period.¹⁰³

The Muslim rulers of Deccan were no less averse to this practice than their brethren in the North. Methwold refers to a case in Masulipatnam where the kotwal refused to give permission for performance of Sati but the woman afterwards circumvented the law by hanging herself.¹⁰⁴ Sometimes the numerical superiority of Muslims prevented the Hindu women from burning themselves. An anonymous Dutch writer corroborates this when he says that the 'Sati is not permitted in place where Moslems are numerous, being against their rule ; and I have seen on two occasions that it was prevented when the women were practically ready to jump into the fire'.¹⁰⁵

Though the Muslims were on the whole averse to the practice of Sati, it was difficult for them to remain 'without being influenced for long by the custom or the attitude which fostered it'. But it should be noted that cases of direct influence are too few to emphasize the point. However it can be asserted that the influence of Sati was limited to those who had an aristocratic Hindu descent or had a predominantly Hindu environment. Jahangir found the custom of Sati prevalent among the muslim people of Rajaur who were originally Hindus and converted into Islam by Sultan Firoz Shah Tughlaq.¹⁰⁶ Ibn Batuta tells us that on the rumour of Ain-ul-Mulk's death, a rebel against Muhammed-bin-Tughlaq, his wife expressed her desire to be burnt like a Hindu widow.¹⁰⁷ Both Hindus and Muslims went in large numbers to witness a Sati¹⁰⁸ and it can be safely asserted that Sati was almost universally admired by people in

103. Bernier, *op. cit.*, p. 306. 'The accounts given of it have been certainly exaggerated and the number of victims is less now than formerly'. Ovington, *op. cit.*, p. 201 writes ! 'This execrable custom is much abated'. S. N. Sen, ed., *op. cit.*, pp. 120, 250 ; Mandelso, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

104. Moreland, *Relations*, etc, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

105. *Ibid.* p. 75.

106. *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, *op. cit.*, Elliot & Dowson, Vol. 6, p. 376.

107. *Rehala*, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

108. *Storia*, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, p. 96 ; *Rehala*, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

medieval India. Even an extremely cultured man like Amir Khusrau exclaimed : 'What a noble thing it is !'¹⁰⁹

The tenacity with which some castes and people of India cherished the rite of Sati is exhibited at Astrakan in Russia in 1722. A leading Indian merchant died there and when the Indians were eager to make his widow burn along with her defunct husband, the authorities considering the practice barbarous, refused permission. As a protest Indian traders removed their factories and commerce from the town and this made the authorities yield to the demand, and the widow was burnt with due pomp and publicity.¹¹⁰

109. W. H. Mirza, *The Life and Works of Amir Khusrau*, p. 186.

• 110. Peter Henry Bruce, *Memoirs*, pp. 252 ff.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FRENCH IN BENGAL :
EARLY YEARS, 1674-1693

ANIRUDDHA RAY

Both the Indian and European scholars had so far neglected the beginning of the French presence in Bengal during its early years. Obviously absence of proper documents and the involvement of the French more in the West and the South of India had engaged the attention of these scholars.¹ The noted French scholar, Paul Kaeppelin² had dwelt on this formative stage of the French in Bengal in his mammoth work, but it remains only a small part in his account of the French activities both in India and abroad. English scholars were far more interested in the struggle between the French and the English in the 18th century while the local Indian scholars of Chandernagore³ did not put forward any cogent summary of the activities of the French in Bengal during this period. This brief article therefore gives emphasis on this period of French activities and tries to analyse and explain the delayed presence of the French in Bengal – the conflicting interests within the French Company and their indecision regarding Bengal during this period. At the same time, it is necessary to look at the process of interaction between the French and the Mughals as well as with other European powers in Bengal. As a matter of fact such a comparative study, including an analysis of some relevant English documents, will give us an understanding of the attitude of the Mughals not only to the French but also to other European Companies and vice-versa. These will also reveal the prevalent political situation in Bengal in the background of the Indian situation, which in turn may explain the easy advance and establishment of the French in Bengal. The beginning of the revolt of Sobha Singh and Rahim Khan around 1694-95 marked a different stage in Bengal, when the European Companies were permitted to fortify their factories and is beyond the scope of this article.

I

While the French merchants had been frequenting the coast of Africa since the 14th century, it is only in 1597, that Henry IV signed a pact with the merchants of St. Mâlo, that finally ushered in the formation of a Society, composed of the merchants of St. Malô and Vitré on November 12, 1600. Henry IV followed this up with the establishment of a French Company of East Indies on June 1, 1604⁴. By 1615, merchants of St. Malô had sent an expedition to Pondicherry and were able to secure the permission to erect a fortress for the safety of the French commerce in the Indies⁵. The Dutch opposition to this attempt by seizing French ships stopped its further progress⁶. In 1635, a new Society was formed in France, chiefly for Madagascar, which received the privileges from the French King in 1642. The Company began to colonise Madagascar⁷. In the spring of 1664, Colbert was able to enthruse a number of merchants in different cities of France and in May 1664, a new Company was formed. In September 1664, it was registered in the Parliament and the transfer of stock from the old Company to the new one was easily effected⁸.

After defining its policy in the Far East, the Company sent agents, along with the agents of the King of France, to the King of Persia and the Mughal Emperor for obtaining the necessary firmans.⁹ It is well-known how Beber and Le Gouz got the firman from the Emperor Aurangzeb on September 4, 1666 which permitted the French to have a warehouse at Surat with the trading rights similar to the English and the Dutch. The French Director, Caron, formerly a Director of the Dutch Company, landed at Surat on 13 February 1668 and made plans to establish warehouses at Coromandel and Malabar¹⁰. It is to be noted that Bengal was only indirectly linked in his plans.

Around this time, the celebrated French traveller, François Bernier, first attracted the attention of the French authorities in India to the prospect of French trade in Bengal.¹¹ We would look at his *Memoir* briefly to see that the French, under the guidance of François Martin, attempted to give shape and succeeded to this plan about ten years later. One would also bear in mind that the

plans formulated by the French Director, Caron, since his landing in 1668, differed in essence from that of Bernier — a fact that has so far escaped the attention of the contemporary historians.

Bernier suggested a neat division of the French at Agra into two parties — one for Bengal and the other for Golconda. The one destined for Bengal should take the overland route upto Patna, where the English and the Dutch have their factories for saltpetre. Bernier did not advocate any French factory to be set up there (reasons not given) and the French would merely meet the Governor Laskar Khan with presents, a necessary ritual in Mughal days. The French then should take the boat to Rajmahal to meet either Shaista Khan, the Mughal Governor of Bengal Suba or his son. So far as setting up a factory was concerned, Bernier strongly recommended Kasimbazar or Makhsudabad (later Murshidabad). For Bernier, advantage of Makhsudabad was that it had a straight road from Rajmahal. But, he strongly recommended that the favour of Shaista Khan was essential, not only because he was the Governor but also because he was the uncle of the Emperor. "One should make him understand our motives, that we are obliged to come to the Indies as they do not like the Dutch"¹².

It is clear that Bernier preferred the French to concentrate on the Hooghly river instead of the Bhagirathi, on whose channel, Dacca, capital of Bengal was then located. After the evacuation of Gaur in 1575 and the silting of the celebrated port of Saptagram around this time, despite the temporary flourish of Rajmahal and Tanda, the Mughals had built the capital at Dacca, which by the time of Bernier, had prospered into a city¹³. Yet the emphasis of Bernier on the Hooghly river, with a base at Kasimbazar or Makhsudabad and linking it with Rajmahal, suggested the building up of trading centre, with heavy urbanisation on the old Hooghly river. It is clear from subsequent history that Bernier was not far wrong.

Bernier's clear reference to the dislike of the Mughals to the Dutch underlines the presence of the Europeans in India, often as a threat. It is evident that the easy access of the French at Surat and hearty welcome offered by the Mughals was due partly to the presence of the English at Surat. But Bernier's principal pre-occupation was trade as he writes : "One sees even that the principal



factory of the Dutch is at Hooghly. However, it would be proper to build our first factory at Kasimbazar, more so as it is the meeting place of all the silk and other merchandise and at Hooghly from where all the big ships come".¹⁴ He also warned that at Kasimbazar, the French would not find the houses like those of Surat — evidently urbanisation was still limited to a few places on the Hooghly river. It is to be noted that the French at one stage, after the departure of Caron, attempted to followup the suggestion of Bernier regarding Kasimbazar without much success.

Caron was then the leading light of the French and it is clear that he did not follow up the suggestion of Bernier. By 1670, Caron had already set-up factories at Malabar and was negotiating at Masulipatam and Bantam. The real objective of Caron was Far East, China and Japan, with Southern India as the base. After his departure for Bantam on May 20, 1671, La Haye led a big squadron from France to Surat, more to frighten the English and the Dutch.¹⁵ By that time the French camp at Surat was divided into pro-Caron and anti-Caron groups. On February 4, 1673, a French agent became resident at Pondicherry and Bengal appeared to have been lost in the exciting activities at Ceylon and Coromandel.¹⁶

II

By 1673, the English had found Shaista Khan, the Subadar of Bengal, "covetous" who had left the administration to his officers, against whom no complaint had any effect¹⁷. The ascendancy of Shaista Khan was more or less absolute as the rumour circulated that he had paid rupees two crores to the Mughal Emperor and had been able to install at Patna, his son Buzurd Umed Khan, dislodging Ibrahim Khan. Far more serious for the English was the installation of Malik Kasem Khan as Faujdar of Balasore from Hooghly. The English hastily joined the intrigue at Dacca to oust Malik Kasem from Balasore and to instal Muhammed Raza, former Faujdar of Makhshudabad, who had been ousted by Malik Kasem after paying Rs. 60,000 to Shaista Khan¹⁸.

Meanwhile the war between the French and the Dutch over St. Thomé continued. In June 1673, a French sloop anchored off

Hooghly which the Dutch wanted to seize. But Abdul Aziz, the Faujdar, protected the ship. Another French ship *Flammand* arrived at Balasore and the crew was well received by Malik Kasem then Faujdar and lodged in the city. He even loaned the French Captain Rs. 3000. But on 22nd June (English calendar), three Dutch ships captured *Flammand* after a stiff fight for three hours. Only a sloop and a boat could get away. The Dutch towed the ship to Hooghly as a mark of victory¹⁹.

Sr. Duplessis, a gentleman from Brittany and one of the merchants in the ill-fated ship, went to Dacca and lodged a complaint against the Dutch for capturing a French ship in a Mughal port, which is against the Firman given to the Dutch. La Haye, still intact with his squadron and fighting desperately against the Dutch, also wrote to Shaista Khan demanding justice. The English hinted that Malik Kasem had instigated Duplessis to go to Dacca²⁰.

By the middle of 1674, the position of the Dutch had deteriorated in Bengal. Their import of lead from Japan to turn into coin at Rajmahal had been stopped by the Japanese. Very few Dutch ships came in 1674 and their debt increased to £ 50,000 ; their purchase also fell considerably as they could not bring gold from Japan and as a result they had to make distress sale of their goods²¹.

The change in the relative trading position of the European trading Companies was seen at Dacca. Duplessis was able to present his case clearly at the Court and the Dutch were forced to return the captured ship on the basis of certificates given by Malik Kasem and other principal merchants of Balasore. What was far more important was that the French were allowed to set up factories in the cities of the Kingdom — a demand that was not included in the letter of La Haye. Once again, the Dutch bogey had made it easy for the French to come in as predicted by Bernier a few years back. The Dutch had to make payments to the Nawab and his officials to prevent further damage²².

The happy tidings had already reached Pondicherry by the middle of August 1674 amidst the threatening loss of St. Thomé to the Dutch. But Duplessis could arrive at Pondicherry only in early

December²³. He had not been idle since August. With the permit, he had gone to Dacca, Kasimbazar, Hooghly and Balasore and had secured land in those places to build factories. His desperate plea for fund and other help was ignored and he had come to see for himself. Although Duplessis had met the Director Baron briefly at Madras and pleaded with Martin for sending an intelligent man with funds to Bengal, nothing was done. The French were too much occupied with war in Southern India and dreams in the Far East. Much later, Martin ruefully commented that the golden opportunity was lost²⁴.

Actually the French were still persuing their policy of trade in the Far East in which India would form part of the triangle. In this, Surat and Southern India would give the support but would never be the dominant partner — the dream of Caron, eagerly caught by the authorities at France, had continued. Bernier's Bengal played practically no part in it. Therefore neither Baron nor Martin showed any real interest in the golden opportunity brought forth through the accident of the *Flammand*, which substituted the embassy to Shaista Khan by a lone French demanding justice.

In fairness to Caron, one should note that the French were fatally involved from 1669 onwards first in Masulipatam, then in St. Thomé and Pondicherry fighting a terrible war with the Dutch. Also the specific program of the French was for Caron to penetrate to China and Japan on the basis of his experience, which had earned him his Directorship²⁵.

The insistence of Duplessis and the easy permission of Shaista Khan influenced Baron a little. Before he left for Surat on May 5, 1675, he had left letters for the Faujdars of Balasore and Hooghly at the hand of Martin at Pondicherry.²⁶ Martin's inactivity regarding Bengal could be explained by his involvement at Pondicherry, which was being built then. Obviously, his resource position was extremely limited. This could be seen in that fact that a Hindu merchant from Bengal, Moutiram, who had acted as a bania to Duplessis in Bengal, turned up at Pondicherry with a loan of Rs. 5,000/- taken by Duplessis in Bengal, besides Rs. 3,000/- taken from Malik Kasem, Faujdar of Balasore. Martin did not have the

fund but he could stall the creditor by agreeing to refer the entire matter to *Sûrat*²⁷.

A question may be asked about the use of this fund by Duplessis which needs some discussion. The earliest contemporary record, the English factors, wrote in 1674 that after getting permission from the Nawab, Shaista Khan, the French built a small house at Hooghly, but were eventually turned out on the application of the Dutch. They then left Hooghly ostensibly on that account but they were without funds and in debt²⁸. Two years later, in 1676, S. Master found the French, after he had passed the Dutch garden, which had been accepted by some scholars as Chandernagore²⁹. Interestingly, Master came on to "a large spot of ground which the French had laid out as a Factory, but which now was in the possession of the Dutch"³⁰, a view that tallied with the account of the English factors. The writings of Charu Chandra Ray³¹ and the manuscript located at Paris proved conclusively that it was only in 1691 that the French came to Chandernagore from Hooghly³². A recent article of an Indian scholar³³ had found that the French had bought 61 bighas of land in the village of Boro Kishanpur, on the basis of permission given by Shaista Khan, from the three Zamindars, Rameshwar, Sriram and Ramkrishna for Rs. 401 only. This village, along with the adjacent village Chaknasirabad, was in the vicinity of Chandernagore. This is complicated by the fact that an anonymous French manuscript, written probably around 1700³⁴ stated that Deslandes bought 61 bighas of land in the village of 'Boroguichempor' (obviously Borokishenpur) about 3 miles from Hooghly and there he built a lodge known since as Chandernagore. It also referred to the prolonged resistance of the Dutch to the French³⁵. This can not obviously be before 1688 as André-Bourreau Deslandes, son-in-law of François Martin, was made Director-General of Bengal only in 1688. Since there are other evidences of the stay of Deslandes at Bandel, it is clear that his house there was called a lodge by others till 1690-91, when it was shifted to Chandernagore by him. It becomes also clear that Duplessis had bought land below Hooghly but his temporary construction was taken over by the Dutch as seen by Master. This would explain the retention of land (the French got it back later) and the stay of Duplessis at Bandel. This would also explain why Hooghly was considered as the principal factory by the.

French at least till 1702, although, by that date, they had shifted. This may therefore explain the expenses of 5,000/- taken by Duplessis as loan from Moutiram. It is interesting that Harihar Shett³⁶, on the basis of Chandernagore papers (now lost) wrote that Duplessis had built a house in a garden north of Chandernagore and they left Chandernagore with a debt of Rs. 8,000/- only (Rs. 5,000/- from Moutiram and Rs. 3,000/- from Malik Kasem). One should also mention that Duplessis had already bought land at Dacca in 1674. But it appears that either he had to transfer this property, which included a building, or he was forced to do so by the Dutch in 1676³⁷. The French, as we would see, again had property at Dacca a few years later.

In 1674, apart from the difficulties of the trade of the Dutch, the financial position of the English in Bengal was also very tight. Due to the Dutch war, no English ship had come in 1674 and the English could survive by raising money on the bill of exchange³⁸. Obviously their far-flung network of trade had far more resources in India than those of the French. Shaista Khan, always looking for money if we believe the English, appeared humane and civilised to the French ("a man of importance and of singular merit" as they called him)³⁹ as he did not trouble the French for money. His lower officer, Malik Kasem had become extremely powerful as he obtained from Dacca the grant of his faujdari of Hooghly, where his son Malik Zindi would deputise for him. Malik Kasem became Faujdar of both Balasore and Hooghly. As expected, Mali Zindi maintained continuous pressures throughout 1676-77 on the English and the Dutch for gifts and money, in which Shaista Khan joined also⁴⁰. But the relation between Shaista Khan and the French continued as cordial as before. As a matter of fact, just before his transfer from Bengal in 1677, Shaista Khan offered to employ a German pilot with four Frenchmen in the service of the French Company, who had arrived at Dacca after a shipwreck, in his own service. On their refusal, they were allowed to go to Pondicherry⁴¹.

III

After a long rule of 14 years, Shaista Khan was replaced by Azam Khan (known as Fidai Khan), who arrived at Dacca in

January 1678 and stopped the trade of all foreigners till they showed him the firmans⁴². He had also put the Zamindars, Qanungos and other officials "in irons, all nuzzerbund in Dacca"⁴³. Fidai Khan died suddenly on 24th May 1678 and was succeeded temporarily by Haji Safi Khan, Dewan-i Suba, who likewise imprisoned all officers. Prince Azam took over from 13 June 1678⁴⁴. His dewan was Muhammed Hasim and peshdast (assistant) Rai Malik Chand, both described by Job Charnock, as very corrupt and abnormally covetous⁴⁵. Hooghly was given as a jaagir of Prince Azam ; it was previously a jaagir of Shaista Khan.⁴⁶ By 1678, Hasb-ul Hukum of the Emperor, sent by Asad Khan the Wazir, had reached Bengal by which the English would pay 2% duty at Surat and Rs. 3,000/-annually at Hooghly for free trade in Bengal, the Prince following it up with a Nishan at the Durbar on 29th September 1678⁴⁷. Haji Shafi Khan, the Dewan, suspected of poisoning Fidai Khan, was recalled and with his impending departure, Malik Kasem, who was in disgrace since the departure of Shaista Khan, again became Faujdar of Hooghly. Fierce struggle among the officers of Fidai Khan and Shafi Khan continued in Makhsudabad and Kasimbazar⁴⁸. This kind of struggle became a continuous feature lower down in the echelons of the administration of Bengal Suba as Prince Azam left for Deccan on October, 6, 1679, after amassing, according to the English, a million pound sterling⁴⁹. By 1678 peace between the French and the Dutch was effected and a party was organised at Hooghly in the Dutch lodge in which the French officers were also present⁵⁰.

Shaista Khan arrived at Dacca on 5th February 1680⁵¹ for his second term which was followed by a firman of the Emperor for the English and was received at Hooghly on 8th July. The firman was accompanied by three Hasb-ul Hukums to the Governors of Bihar, Bengal and Orissa of Asad Khan, the Wazir, along with the relevant documents of the Qazi of Ajmere, from where Aurangzeb had issued the firman, in the wake of his imposition of the Jiziya⁵².

So far the presence of the French was not felt in Bengal. By the early years of 1680's, their trouble at Pondicherry was over. In March 1682, Martin, who joined the Council at Surat, wrote to the Company of the advantages that can be obtained from the coast of Bengal, regretting at the same time that the French so far had

nothing in Bengal, thus confirming our assumption that the French lodges at Dacca and Chandernagore had been transferred⁵⁸. Once more, another incident brought the French involvement in Bengal. By that time the French debt at Surat had increased to one million rupees and there was no fund even to pay salaries of the employees⁵⁴.

In 1684, while the English had troubles with the Faujdar of Malda and Rajmahal as well as with the Qazi of Kasimbazar, in which the weavers and the local merchants had joined the Faujdar (matter under the attention of Shaista Khan)⁵⁵, a French ship, *St. Joseph*, had arrived at Hooghly with Regnault, Pellé and Gregoire Butet⁵⁶. Bertrand, a French merchant, wanted to raise Rs. 12,000 by bills of exchange for making the necessary purchase, regarding which nothing further was heard. In January 1686, the ship *Royale* anchored at Surat with the information that François Martin had been named as Director of the coasts of Coromandel, Bengal and other places in Southern India, which began a new phase of the French in Bengal⁵⁷.

IV

By the end of May 1686, Martin, Deslandes and others from Surat had arrived at Pondicherry. Bertrand and Daguinet had already arrived in Bengal and had been able to freight an English ship for Rs. 1,500 and had it laden with 1000 sacks of saltpetre⁵⁸. By the middle of January 1687, the ships *St. Joseph* had come back to Pondicherry from Bengal with diverse merchandise worth of 25,000 Ecu. By that time, violence between the Mughals and the English had started on the interpretation of the firman. The English had left Hooghly, pillaged Ballasore and had retired to Hijli⁵⁹. Regnault's letter from Hooghly, written in early 1687, showed that in the absence of the English, the French had increased their trade quite considerably⁶⁰. By May 1687, information arrived from Surat that the French authorities at Paris had approved of the opening of the establishment in Bengal and Golconda⁶¹. Thus the policy recommended by Bernier had at long last was adopted.

By June 1687, Regnault at Hooghly had been able to sell the merchandise brought by the ship *St. Joseph* and had even advanced money for the purchase⁶². The English were still at Hijli and

Shaista Khan, almost "a sovereign of the country" had sent Abdus Samad to Hooghly to make peace with the English. On arrival, Samad used the terror tactics and killed a Spaniard who was in the service of a Zamindar, by putting him in front of the canon. This enraged the Portuguese at Bandel. the Christian quarters at Hooghly and Samad began to employ his terror tactic on them. He suspended some of the Portuguese from the tree and collected a large sum from one of the Hindu merchants by torturing him in the rack. Following the friendly relation with Shaista Khan, the French had no trouble with Samad, who had received Regnault well. The moment Samad had left Hooghly, the Zamindar, under whom the Spaniard was serving, rose in revolt and began to pillage the country with 12 to 15,000 people⁶³.

By 1688, the French realised that the lower echelon of the government in Bengal can not be satisfied by simply maintaining cordial relationship with the higher echelon. This was an inevitable conclusion of the Christians in Bengal as the English and the Dutch continually complained of this. The demand for graft was inherent in a system in which the higher strata of the administration continually pressed the lower ones for such graft, which in turn passed the buck to the trading community and in certain cases on to the Zamindars as well. This becomes evident in the cases of the change of the Faujdars and other officials which followed inevitably the departure of the Subadar and the installation of a new one. Martin therefore looked for the means to get the firman from the Emperor⁶⁴ following the example of the English, who had earlier attempted to change the Faujdars in vain.

Meanwhile, *St. Joseph* had returned to Pondicherry from Bengal with merchandise worth 100,000 Ecus along with a freighted ship laden with saltpetre, which remained a consistent item among the French. The English, by that time, had to abandon Hijli⁶⁵ and Shaista Khan, obviously finding the golden goose fleeing away, offered them terms to settle at Hooghly, a jaagir of Shaista Khan. But the English insisted first on the transfer of the Faujdar of Hooghly and retired to Balasore. The Dutch began to regulate the price and had trouble with the merchants⁶⁶.

By January 1688, Shaista Khan was obliged to send a new

Collector of Customs at Hooghly and forbid the Faujdar of Hooghly to enter the Customhouse⁶⁷. Martin began to invest in Bengal and sent 20,000 Ecu by the ship *Cosmos* with a promise of further investment. By August 1688, he had sent another ship *Ferilly* to Hooghly with further investment⁶⁸. By that time, Bahadur Khan had arrived to take the place of Shaista Khan as Nawab⁶⁹.

With the departure of Shaista Khan, trouble started with the French in Bengal. Since the English were not there and the Dutch trade stopped due to quarrel with the merchants over price regulation, it was the turn of the French. For the first time, the French began to complain of Bahadur Khan as most covetous. Regnault had further trouble of bringing the money out of the ship *Cosmos* as there was no firman to that effect. The trouble between Regnault and some French employees had almost paralysed the French lodge at Hooghly. Considering all these difficulties, Martin decided to change the personnel of the Hooghly Factory⁷⁰.

On August 30, 1688, André-Bourreau Deslandes, Huet de la Clartiere (merchant), Fonnevillle (clerk) and Quentin (physician) sailed from Pondicherry in the ship *St. Nicholas*, with precious metals and stones, including amber and coral. On 4th September, Martin diverted the ship *St. Joseph* destined for Far East to Bengal with 10,000 livres and merchandise⁷¹. The French effort in Bengal began in real earnest.

The initial complication for the French was solved by the sudden death of Regnault on September 4, 1688. By early January 1689, Deslandes had been able to organise the Hooghly factory and had sent Frenchmen to Kasimbazar to make purchases. The English had settled their differences and had begun their commerce without opposition from the Mughal officials⁷². Martin, at Pondicherry, was not satisfied and sent *St. Nicholas*, which had come back to Pondicherry from Bengal, with 10,000 Ecus worth of merchandise, on March 3, 1689. He followed this up by diverting the ship *Merguy* with 30,000 Ecus from Masulipatam to Bengal⁷³. Fortune now intervened against the French as information reached Pondicherry about the war in Europe and the order to stop purchase everywhere in India⁷⁴. But before this could reach Hooghly, Deslandes had acted with appropriate zeal and energy.

By early August 1689, Deslandes had ordered merchandise worth of Rs. 50,000, half of which he had already collected. But the custom officials begun to insist on duty or graft whichever is higher. Deslandes, however, had arranged to establish factories at Kasimbazar and Balasore and had requested Martin to supply him with small boats to negotiate the canals and creeks of Bengal. Meanwhile Bahadur Khan had been asked to leave and Martin hinted that during the brief stay of 18 months in Bengal, Bahadur Khan had been able to collect nearly 15 to 20 million rupees⁷⁵.

Both Martin and Deslandes had decided to go for a firman which would protect the interests of the French trade in Bengal. Deslandes, unaware of the war in Europe, had now collected merchandise worth about Rs. 60,000. He got in touch with the Dewan-i Suba, who promised him a firman from the Emperor for a sum of Rs. 35,000⁷⁶. Since the Dewan was very sympathetic to the French, Deslandes began to make a plan for the building of a lodge.

By February 1690, the new Subadar Ibrahim Khan had made peace with the English, receiving a payment of Rs. 1,50,000 in the process, if the French information is correct⁷⁷. The events that followed, for the French, remained a little obscure to this day. A brief comparison with the English position at this point would show that the French had been treated much better by the Mughals than either the English or the Dutch—a kind of treatment that the Mughals had continued with the French throughout.

While the English, led by Job Charnock (died 11 February 1693 : English calendar), remained at Chuttanuttee, after fleeing from the Mughals, the Court of Directors, from London, wrote to Fort St. George on February 15, 1689, that "...we are content he should build a factory there (i.e. at Chuttanuttee) but with as much frugality as may be..." . On the same day, the Court wrote to Bengal that they "...approved of your building a factory at Chuttanuttee if you find it necessary for our service..." . The Court followed this up with a letter dated 11 September 1689 : "...if the Moors will allow us to fortify ourselves at Chuttanuttee where our ships may go up and ride within the command of our Guns it would be much better for us though it would cost us a bribe of thirty or forty thousand rupees..."⁷⁸.

These pious wishes are however very much distant from the reality. Chuttanuttee Diary & Consultation, dated 21 August 1690, pointed out its miserable condition : "...found the place (i.e. Chuttanuttee) in a very deplorable condition, and the Rains falling day and night, we are forced to betake ourselves to Boats..."⁷⁹. Seven days later, on 28 August, the resolution was taken that "...in consideration that all the former buildings here are destroyed, it is resolved that such places be built as necessity requires and as cheap as possible...". All the buildings would of mud walls and thatched roofs⁸⁰. Their situation remained unaltered even after a year. On December 20, 1691, Fort St. George wrote the Court of Directors that Charnock still continued at Chuttanuttee "contrary to all reason and consent of the Government who will neither permit building a factory or merchants to settle or trade with them, but offer more convenient place for it, two miles below Hooghly, but that he will not hear of, supposed to proceed from his fears of being seized by some of the Government his irreconcilable enemys and for his better security..." Fort St. George praised the Nawab for his excellent behaviour to the English President and blamed Charnock for continuing "his old differences with particular men..."⁸¹.

In 1690, Deslandes had left his rented house at Bandel and moved into a house left by the English interlopers⁸². In May 1690, Father Duchatz, an architect by profession was sent to Hooghly at the request of the Portuguese Jesuit at Bandel.⁸³ He prepared a plan for the construction of the French lodge, which was sent to Martin at Pondicherry with an estimate of Rs. 26,000⁸⁴. After this we find that Deslandes had left Bandel, perhaps due to his quarrel with the Augustine religious leaders at Bandel as we would see, and came to a village, since named as Chandernagore. Probably he occupied the same plot of land bought by Duplessis in 1674. Hooghly however continued to hold the nomenclature of the French Headquarters in Bengal atleast till 1696 when for the first time Chandernagore was used in the correspondence⁸⁵. As usual the Dutch resisted such a move and Deslandes sent the under-merchant Gregoire Butet to Dacca to fight the case with the Subadar Ibrahim Khan. By April 1690, Butet had been able to get satisfaction from the Nawab after the usual expenses and Deslandes immediately began to construct the walls enclosing the land⁸⁶. It is only when the wall was built, that

the sanctioned plan formulated by Father Dutchaz and approved by Martin arrived. There is also unconfirmed reference of Deslandes renting a house of a muslim Abdul Hadi⁸⁷. It is also known that Butet had stayed in the Farasganj quarter, near the Portuguese quarter, at Dacca⁸⁸—the French choice of staying close to the Portuguese is seen here also. It is interesting to note that Deslandes had already built a lodge at Kasimbazar by 1690 and had planned to build a factory adjacent to it by the end of December 1691⁸⁹. Therefore Kasimbazar lodge was the first one built and owned by the French in Bengal.

In 1691, Deslandes had serious trouble with the Augustine Portuguese of Bandel. They came in a body with armed Christians and forced open the lodge. Instead of calling the Faujdar, Deslandes retired to Chandernagore if we are to believe this version⁹⁰. It should be noted that the shifting of Deslandes from Bandel to Chandernagore had occurred before his quarrel with the Portuguese priests and Butet had already got the satisfaction from the Nawab. In that case, one can not accept this quarrel as a serious factor of the French departure from Bandel. Since the French lodge at Hooghly was maintained till the end of the century, it may be surmised that the quarrel with the Portuguese priests was intended merely for a cover. By 1692, Deslandes had begun to invest at Chandernagore by constructing a Church, known since as the Church of Notre Dame, where lay entombed the remains of his wife and two daughters⁹¹.

While the English letters, cited above, clearly spoke of the unwillingness of the Nawab to allow the English to build, the same permission was easily given to the French. Emboldened, Deslandes began the construction of the lodge while the English attempt to build had been opposed by the Mughal officials on the ground that they must first return to Hooghly. But then the English had also begun to build disregarding the warning of the Mughal officials.

Once the problem of the lodge was settled, Martin and Deslandes turned their attention to the firman, since the Mughal custom officials began to make exorbitant demands⁹². By the end of March 1692, Deslandes was authorised to pay Rs. 35,000 to the Dewan-i Suba for the firman. By September 1691, first floor of the lodge had been

completed⁹⁸. But three things happened to worsen the position of the French Company as well as French officials in Bengal.

By the end of November 1691, the French trade was getting weaker primarily due to the fact that no ship had come from France due to the war in Europe⁹⁴. As a result, the financial position of the French Company in India had become acute. By January 1692, Hooghly could send to Pondicherry only a small boat laden with rice⁹⁵. By the middle of July 1692, French lodge was full to the brim with various merchandise worth of Rs. 40,000, that could not either be sent to France or be sold in Bengal. The Dutch meanwhile had solved their pricing problem and was doing a flourishing trade. The English were still bogged down to negotiation with the Mughal officials on Chuttanuttee⁹⁶. Secondly, Pondicherry had unequivocally prohibited any private trading by the French officials. Thirdly, Dewan had raised his claim to Rs. 40,000 for the firman⁹⁷. The situation was further complicated by the report circulating of some Hindu Rajas in open revolt on the reported order of Aurangzeb to destroy a Hindu temple⁹⁸.

By early September 1692, while the French lodge had been holding a shipload of merchandise for France, Deslandes adopted the old method of influencing the Dewan. On a payment of Rs. 400/-, a servant of the Dewan informed him of the decision of the French to leave Bengal due to the haggling with the Mughal officials. Alarmed at the prospect, Dewan asked for a French envoy to be sent to the Court. Meanwhile, the English had settled their differences while the Dutch trade flourished. Deslandes ruefully admitted that he had not seen for a longtime thirty ships of different nations floating before Hooghly ; the boom had just begun⁹⁹.

To the credit of Deslandes, one should say that he had no other option than selling his assets to procure funds. By December 1692, he was able to sell the ship *Merguy* to a Portuguese merchant for Rs. 4,500 and the ship *Aigle* to a group of Armenian merchants for Rs. 16,800. With more than Rs. 20,000 in cash, he finalised his negotiation with the Dewan, who got panicky at such distress sales. He promised to deliver the firman for Rs. 40,000, out of which Rs. 10,000 would be given after the delivery and Rs. 5000 annually till the final payment. It is clear that the payment would be made

to the Mughal government and not to the Dewan personally. Meanwhile, on an order given by the Mughal Emperor, the Nawab Ibrahim Khan stopped the trading in saltpetre¹⁰⁰.

In 'Early January 1693, the Dewan-i Suba Khayasad Khan had informed Deslandes of the arrival of the firman at Dacca which gave rise to different rumours. In late January, Deslandes received the firman at Dacca after a payment of Rs. 10,000 in cash and promisory bill by which the Company was obliged to pay Rs. 30,000 in six years i.e. Rs. 5000 a year. The firman gave the same privileges to the French as were given to the English and the Dutch. The French would trade in Bengal, Orissa and Bihar (Deslandes had already established a factory at Patna). By this, the French need not take their goods to the custom house, thus avoiding the haggling with the Custom officers on the price of merchandise. The French would pay the same rate of Customs in Hooghly, Balasor and Piply and would pay no other rahdari or other duties. The rate of duties would be $3\frac{1}{2}\%$ and the mode of payment was discussed also. In any case, it was not a duty-free privilege in lieu of annual payment. The Nawab Ibrahim Khan and the Dewan-i Suba Khayasad Khan had issued a Sanad to this effect¹⁰¹.

Misfortune once again struck the French at this hour of triumph. The Dutch attacked Pondicherry by land and sea and after a stiff resistance for several months, French in Pondicherry laid down their arms on September 7, 1693 and evacuated Pondicherry. After a brief sojourn in the Far East in a Dutch ship, François Martin and his companions reached Bengal on 15 February 1694, where they witnessed and occasionally resisted the attacks of the revolt led by Maha Singh and Rahim Khan, which in turn gave the European powers the liberty to fortify their factories¹⁰². By the end of 1693, with the temporary loss of Pondicherry, the French settled in Bengal, legally and commercially. Thus, within a span of 25 years of the writings of Bernier, two Frenchmen, Deslandes and Martin, had been able to achieve far more than Bernier had dreamt of, despite the opposition of the Dutch, the European war and constant shortage of fund. Needless to say that the fall of Pondicherry was one of the factors that helped the French trade to grow in Bengal in the early years of the 18th century.

V

One can divide the activities of the French into three broad stages. The first stage starts from the establishment of the French Company at Surat till 1674 when Duplessis got permission from Shaista Khan to possess land in Bengal. During that period, the French, under the leadership of Caron concentrated more on the Western and the Southern coasts and attempted to expand towards Ceylon, Siam and Bantam, to reach finally China and Japan. Only Bernier, in 1668, before his departure from Surat, looked positively to the establishment of the French in India, in which, he suggested the French beginning in Bengal through Shaista Khan. Although Caron's plan shelved the Bengal project for quite some time, the accidental arrival of Duplessis at Dacca with a complaint of Dutch highhandedness, triggered this off. But the French were far more involved in the southern India to exploit the golden opportunity.

Needless to say, that one of the reasons of the success of Duplessis was that the Mughal Subadar, Shaista Khan, was against the Dutch and had viewed with alarm the consolidation of the Dutch power in Bengal. It may be that Bernier was aware of Shaista Khan's antipathy to the Dutch and had advised the French to state clearly their opposition to the Dutch. Both the Nawab and his tyrannical subordinate, Malik Kasem, welcomed the French on the expectation that they would act as a pressure group. It was the stage of the first contact between the French and the local power, local merchants and the local markets. Overshadowed by Caron's glittering dreams of the Far East, they naturally put Bengal lower down in the priority of the plan.

The second stage, from 1674 to 1688, saw the development of relation between the French and the local traders — a little haphazard and uncertain. In this stage, the French faced for the first time the difficulties created by the custom officials regarding which the English and the Dutch had been complaining for long. Yet the French policy towards Bengal trade was neither certain nor assuring to the Home authorities as they had not yet approved of such a policy. Only when Martin became Director of the coast (information reached India in 1686) that saw the beginning of the modification of the policy of Caron and an attempt to adopt a definite policy.

towards Bengal trade. By this time the preliminaries had been over — Duplessis had got land in different parts of Bengal and good rapport had been established between the French and higher authorities of the Bengal Subah as well as with the local merchants. But the modification of the policy of Caron, the turning away from the Far East to the Bengal coast was influenced to a large extent by the happenings in the Far East.

Caron had established a factory at Bantam in 1671. But the Dutch war prevented the trade as the French, with enough liquid cash at hand, were unable to employ it. The reason, besides the Dutch war, was that the Dutch had practically forced the King of Bantam to prohibit any trade with the French. Only after the peace, the French ship *Tonkin*, sent by the French Director Baron, who still adhered the policy of Caron, could anchor at Bantam on May 28, 1680. By that time the French resources had become almost exhausted, although commerce started. Another ship the *Soleil d'Orient* did take cloth from Pondicherry to Bantam and returned to Madagascar laden with pepper, and letters and diamonds for Louis XIV, from the King of Bantam. It was wrecked in a storm soon after and could not reach France¹⁰⁸. From 1682, a civil war rocked Bantam between the old King and his young son, who had called the Dutch for help. The Dutch General at Batavia, Speelman, immediately intervened and installed the young King. The Dutch now forced other Europeans, the Portuguese, the English and the French, to withdraw from Bantam. In February 1684, the French left Bantam leaving all their investment¹⁰⁹.

In the wake of the Christian missionaries, the French Director, Baron, had sent the ship *Vautour* from Surat to Pondicherry to pick up André Bourreau Deslandes for Siam, where he arrived in September 1680¹⁰⁵. With characteristic zeal and despite the opposition from the English and the Dutch, Deslandes had an excellent meeting with the King of Siam and opened commerce, purchasing products from China and Japan, brought there by the Chinese traders. Deslandes could also obtain a treaty of commerce and a piece of land at Jork, thanks to the mediation by a Greek, Constance Phulkon, Chief Minister and a favourite of the King. An embassy was sent to France by the King of Siam in 1681. But between 1680 and 1683, only one French sloop could arrive at

Siam. Exasperated by the situation, Deslandes left Siam and arrived at Surat on 1st of March 1684. Meanwhile only one ship, *St. Louis* had left for Siam with merchandise and had come back to Surat with merchandise on 7th March 1685.

Meanwhile, Martin had begun to concentrate on the Coromandel coast. It was clear to him that the French commerce in India at this period was miserable, mostly suffering from the exhaustion of the Company in France¹⁰⁶. Only the General Assembly of 11 September 1685 in France, led by the Minister Seignelay, succeeding Colbert, had to reconstitute the Company with a new charter and with new capital¹⁰⁷. The new Directors emphasized the beginning of the commerce in Bengal in all types of cloth as the Surat factory had only been sending painted cloth and had thus become almost inactive¹⁰⁸. By the end of 1686, ships had come back from India and had a good sale in France, which included cloth from Bengal. The year 1687 also saw the return of the ships laden with merchandise which had a good sale in France¹⁰⁹. Thus the end of the period saw the reorganisation of the Company and a new direction that soon became apparent in its commerce in India.

The third stage begins from 1688 and ends for our purposes, in 1693. By April 1686, the merchants of Surat had already written to the Directors on the richness of the trade in Bengal while Deslandes had warned them of the illusions of Siam trade¹¹⁰. By early 1685, the Directors had already informed Surat merchants about the bad sale of Ahmedabad Painted cloth in France and had asked them to reduce it further¹¹¹. This reduced in turn the activities and investment of Surat factory, which was further troubled by the demands of the Shah Bandar of Surat, Salabat Khan. The French at Surat declared the situation as intolerable. Only in January 1687, when Salabat Khan was replaced by Mahmud Khan, that the situation returned to its earlier stability¹¹². But by that time the political situation of the hinterland and that of the Mughal Empire had taken an unsavoury turn. The Mughal campaigns in Golconda and Bijapur, from 1685 to 1687, spread confusion and disorder, although militarily it was a success. Pilavoine and Roques, writing from Surat in October 1686, gave a graphic description of the condition of the Empire : "...his own states are in last stage of desolation by famine, people revolting on all sides...". They pointed out that Surat is not the

same as it was found years back and its coast was full of alarm by the pirates¹¹³. Thus a mediocre commerce and political situation turned the face of the French from Western coast to the eastern coast, to the Gulf of Bengal.

Even at the end of November 1687, the French merchandise could not be sold around Pondicherry due to the miserable condition of the country. But that did not deter the French from occupying Bangkok on 18 October 1687, followed by the signing of a much more favourable commercial treaty¹¹⁵.

The only silver light in this gloomy period was the prospect of the French commerce in Bengal. By February 1688, Regnault had been able to fill up two ships, *St. Joseph* and *St. Côme* (freighted), with saltpetre and other merchandise, while the Mughal-Maratha conflict was ruining the textile industry of the Carnatic¹¹⁶. Martin therefore had pitched his hopes on Bengal, where Deslandes was sent in August 1686 to oversee the sale of the French merchandise. At the same time, Martin began the fortification of Pondicherry¹¹⁷, which coinciding with the establishment in Bengal, promised a bright future for French trade. By that time, he had obtained a firman from the Emperor Aurangzeb for trade in Masulipatam¹¹⁸. The revolution in Siam and the beginning of war in Europe checked the initial expansion.

By 15 January 1689, the French had to abandon their posts at Siam, leaving about twenty dead and returned to Pondicherry, thanks to the English assistance, in a miserable condition. The Dutch assistance to Opra Pittracha, rebelling against the King and Phulkon, had taken the French completely by surprise¹¹⁹. By 31 May 1689, Pondicherry had heard of the beginning of the war in Europe¹²⁰. The Dutch had appeared in the waters of Pondicherry while the Mughals and the Marathas fought a bitter war in eastern Deccan from March 1690 onwards, that ravaged the entire country. As cited already, the Dutch took Pondicherry in early September 1693. The losses of Siam, Ceylon and then Pondicherry helped the French to concentrate in Bengal, where the arrival of the firman gave them a legal footing. The suspension of the activities at Surat further accelerated the process. This was the period when the relationship between the French and the local merchants took on a new

meaning with the occupation of the English with the Mughals and the Dutch refusing the merchants the price they wanted. Abdus Samad Khan openly avowed his hostility towards the Christians of Bandel yet received the French with eagerness and amiability unknown to the English and the Dutch. Obviously the Mughals wanted the French to come in at Bengal and settle there so that they could act as a pressure group against both the Dutch and the English.

The Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, reputed to have leaned towards orthodoxy during his later years¹⁹¹, had not only compromised with the English after the Hooghly and Hijli affair, but allowed the French the same terms and conditions granted earlier by Shaista Khan. One should also mention that Aurangzeb exempted the Christians from paying the Ziziya in 1686, obviously to gain their support in Mughal-Maratha conflict in the Deccan, but ostensibly on the application of the Portuguese. In 1693, Aurangzeb temporarily prohibited other European Companies to trade, excepting the French, for piracy on Mughal shipping in the Indian ocean¹⁹². It was also the year when the firman was granted to the French in Bengal.

Martin was quite astonished in the successful entry of the French in Bengal so cheaply. He did not realise that it was not the trading success of the French that made the Mughals to beckon the French from distant horizon ; neither the close coordination of Martin and Deslandes or the efficiency of the latter and the vision of the former were the primary elements of such an entry. The Indian mercantile communities would be quite willing to bring other European traders to reduce the monopoly of the Dutch. The advance system, practiced in Bengal, further strengthened the hands of a new group of middlemen who would be clamouring for the presence of the European Companies. The political situation in the Deccan and in the western coast favoured a concentration of capital in the eastern coast, which began to rise in influence, albeit only in several pockets. The internal structure of the French Company, which was failing to generate, was given a new lease and a new direction that oriented towards the Bengal gulf. Thus several factors were responsible for the French establishment in Bengal.

In looking at the process of the French penetration in Bengal during these early years, in comparison to those of the English and the Dutch, certain trends may be discerned. The documents which we have cited, showing the relation between the European powers and the Mughals, reveal to us a three-tier structure of the Mughal administration in Bengal. On the top, there were the Subadar and the Dewan appointed by the Central Government. Below that level were the Faujdars and the Mutsuddis appointed by the Subadar and the Dewan-i Suba during this period. At the bottom, we have occasional glimpses of the officials like the Collector of customs, other custom officials, Peshdast and so on. It is interesting to note that the English were trying very hard to influence the appointments of the second tier officials, particularly the Faujdar, for which they even intrigued at the court of the Subadar at Dacca. Occasionally, they tried to influence the appointment of the third tier officials. Needless to say that they did not succeed but this is the germ from which they got the idea to influence the appointment of the top tier in the middle of the 18th century, when the influence of the Central Government absolutely declined.

What is significant at this period is the tremendous in-fighting, at the level below the Subadar, among the officials, particularly at the time of the change of the Subadars whose appointments were still controlled by Delhi. By the end of the 17th century, it became a common practice for the new Subadars in Bengal to appoint their own people, ousting those appointed by the previous Subadars, after taking a sizeable amount of money from the incumbents. As seen, often these changes were resisted by violent means. Thus while the province was enjoying a fair degree of peace and stability during the last decade of the 17th century, a fair amount of in-fighting and violence were continuing in the different port-towns of Bengal.

Obviously such changes of second and third tier appointments were done on the basis of graft or cash to be paid by the incumbent. The Subadar-Dewan would pass on a percentage of this graft to the central government but would keep a portion for themselves, as evidenced in such collection during the short stay of Bahadur Khan or Prince Azam. It appears that the second and the third tier officials could have the only alternative to extort these from the

trading communities, both Indian and European. This would suggest a fair degree of commercialisation as opposed to racial and tribal mores being the determinant factor. The concentration of the three European Companies in Bengal must have accelerated this process further. There are evidences that Portuguese private traders were also quite active during this period. The existence of a large number of Ijaras¹²³ also show the absence of a steady land-policy of the Mughals in Bengal and the prevalence of adhoc arrangements. The lower officials there relied more on the traders, particularly rich and vulnerable European Companies, for their graft.

Another trend to be noted is the slow development of urbanisation in Bengal. Although Dacca and Hooghly had emerged clearly as urban centres, yet it appears that the Indian traders did not invest on housing as they did in the western coast. Dacca, Hooghly or Cassimbazar can not compare with that of Surat so far as housing is concerned, which had been clearly underlined by Bernier and other travellers¹²⁴. This may partly explain the abnormal cheapness of the provisions in Bengal and its export¹²⁵ since the demand for consumption would be far more diffused in the absence of big urban centres. The comparative ease with which the rebels, Sobha Singh and Rahim Khan and later Maha Singh, ran through the small urban areas almost without any resistance and their continuing pressure on the European trading Companies for cash, point to this direction. The absence of such conglomeration of urban areas, in comparison to those of Western India, may explain partly the absence of resistance to tyrannical attitude and easy extortion of cash from the trading communities by the officials of the Mughal administration. It is significant, that after the revolt of Sobha Singh, the local merchants mustered enough courage to refuse to do any business till their colleague is released¹²⁶. It may be noted that except for Mathuradas of Hooghly and two merchants of Balasore, there was no other local merchant of any note in Bengal doing any overseas trade, which was generally done by the members of the ruling class¹²⁷. As a matter of fact, one should note, that along with the limited credit available in Bengal¹²⁸, none of the Bengali merchants at this period could compare themselves with those of Surat.

While the English merchants were trying to influence the second tier of the Mughal administration in Bengal, Bernier had advocated

concentration on the top echelon for the French. However the French were welcomed by Shaista Khan, whose attempt to counter the English and particularly the Dutch against whom he was bitterly opposed¹⁸⁰, had been told. The initial appearance of the French was thus smooth, not because of the French ability to trade better, but because of certain conditions prevailing in Bengal. With the departure of Shaista Khan, the second and third tier officials did not accept such a compromise for the French and began to give pressure. It would therefore be simplistic to categorise the Mughal administration as one block, well-oiled wheel moving in one direction on the touch of a master, as there were various pulls and pressure within itself¹⁸¹.

What is more striking was the fact that the rule of the Central Government had become far more distant in Bengal. As a matter of fact, the English factors clearly remarked that compared to the firmans of Shah Jahan, those of Aurangzeb were less obeyed and less feared in Bengal¹⁸². It may be that the involvement of Aurangzeb in the Mughal-Maratha conflict in the Deccan, had made him to supervise much more closely the affairs of Gujarat than those in Bengal, which was running peacefully. But beneath the placid surface of Bengal politics, there was running the violent trends, which erupted in the revolts of Sobha Singh and Rahim Khan, that almost obliterated the Mughal rule in Bengal. The delayed presence of the French in Bengal further accelerated the process of commercialisation as well as the system of graft with its consequences. But Bengal, at the end of the 17th century, was the only hope left for the French in India.

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10. *Ibid*, 11-12.
11. Memoirs of Francois Bernier dated March 10, 1668 in *Archives Nationales et Coloniales* (in brief AN here), Paris, Colonie C(2)62, ff 14-25. See A. Ray : "Last Memoir of Francois Bernier from Surat ; March 10, 1668" in *The Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Bodh Gaya Session, 1981, 241-257.
12. *Bernier*, f 22.
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14. *Bernier*, f 21v.
15. *Kaepelin*, 65.
16. *Ibid*, 104.
17. *English Factories in India*, ed. by C. Fawcett, Oxford, 1952, Vol. II, 360 (in brief *EFI* here).
18. *Ibid*, 360-362.
19. For the entire incident, see *Memoires de Francois Martin* ; ed. by A. Martineau, Paris, 1931-34, 3 Vols., Vol. I, 539-41 (in brief *Martin* here). See also *EFI*, 363. Martin did not mention that the French had borrowed Rs. 200/- from the English factory.
20. *Martin* ; *EFI*, 379.
21. *EFI*, 380.
22. *Ibid* ; also *Martin*.

23. In the middle of September 1674, St. Thomé capitulated to the Dutch (*Martin*, I, 665-670). For the arrival of Duplessis, *Martin*, II, 5-6.
24. *Ibid*, 6. S. Master, on September 23, 1676, found a spot of ground allotted to the French in the middle of the town of Kasimbazar (*The Diaries*, ed. by R. C. Temple, London, 1911, 2 Vols., Vol. I, 329); which Temple thought would be "Saidabad, where the French factory was afterwards built" (fn. 6, 329).
25. See the terms and conditions of the appointment of Francois Caron in *AN*, C(5)A 1, pièce 10, ff 1-2. For the French activities in Southern India and Far East, See S.P. Sen, *op. cit.*
26. *Martin*, II, 7.
27. *Ibid*, 53-54.
28. *EFI*, 380.
29. See "Leaves from Editor's Notebook" in *Bengal Past & Present* (in brief *BPP* here), 1909, July-December, Vol. IV, 616. Harihar Shett wrote that Duplessis had bought 20 arpents of land, equivalent to nearly 60 bighas, in 1673-74 at Chandernagore (*op. cit.*, 2-6). He had located this land in the present Taldanga of northern Chandernagore, which was then known as Tautkhana". Duplessis had built a small house there (*op. cit.*, 2-3).
30. Master : *Diaries*, I, 325 (under September 13, 1676).
31. Charu Chandra Ray : "Notes on the Headquarter of the French East India Company at Hooghly" in *BPP*, 1911, Vol. VII, 172-177. Ray is incorrect in stating that the first mention of Chandernagore in the French documents occurred only 1702, although his general view seems to be correct.
32. Mémoires sur la Compagnie des Indes Orientales, written around 1720 in *Bibliothèque Nationale* (in brief *BN* here), Paris, Fonds Français 6231, f 18r.
33. Indrani Ray : *Chandernagorer Adiparba*", 711-712.
34. Des Etablissement Français en Asie principalement de ceux de Bengale in *BN*, Paris, N. A. 9367, ff 10-11.
35. *Ibid*, f 11.
36. Shett, *op. cit.*, 2-4.
37. Apart from indirect references in *Martin*, see the list of documents from Chinsura handed over by the Government of India to the Government of Netherland (printed in *The Proceedings of the Asiatic Society*, 1871, April), in which Packet No. 8 contained documents respecting the transfer of some premises at Dacca from the French authorities to the Dutch in 1674.
38. *EFI*, 381.

39. *Martin*, II, 85.
40. *EFI*, 396-428.
41. *Martin*, II, 83-85 for the entire incident.
42. *EFI*, III, 152 (Oxford, 1955).
43. *Ibid*, 154.
44. *Ibid*, 155.
45. *Ibid*, 157.
46. *Ibid*, 159. The Nawab can waive custom charges here.
47. *Ibid*, 160-163. This was based on the following documents :
 - (a) Shah Jahan's firman of 1650 — custom free except at Surat
 - (b) Parwana of Jafar Khan, Wazir in the 9th year of the Regn of Aurangzeb
 - (c) Aurangzeb's firman of 25 June 1667 reducing the rate of custom at Surat from 3% to 2%. See Anjali Chatterjee : *Bengal in the Reign of Aurangzeb*, Calcutta, 1967 and for recent discussion, Sushil Choudhury : *Trade and Commercial Organisation in Bengal*, Calcutta, 1975, particularly 28 post.
48. *EFI*, 172-178.
49. *Ibid*, 191-192.
50. *Ibid*, 222
51. *Ibid*, 225.
52. *Ibid*, 230-231. For the interpretation of the firman, see Chaterjee, *op. cit.*, 131-133 and S. Chaudhury, *op. cit.*, 33-35, both the scholars basing themselves on the interpretations of Wilson and Sarkar, J. N.
53. *Martin*, II, 290.
54. *Kaepelin*, 175.
55. *EFI*, 330 post.
56. *Martin*, II, 366-67.
57. *Ibid*, 418-20.
58. *Ibid*, 442.
59. For the French interpretation, see *Martin*, II, 464-65. On 20th December 1686, the English had left Hooghly with all their property and halted at the hamlet of Sutanati. On 9th February 1687, they left Sutanati and arrived at Hijli after capturing the Mughal port of Thana on the way (*History of Bengal*, ed. by J. N. Sarkar, Dacca, 1972, 2nd ed., Vol. II, 383-86). Martin put the seizure of Hijli within the month of January since there is a difference of ten days between the English and the French calendar. Also see, Chatterjee, *op. cit.*, 144-149.
60. *Martin*, II, 474-75.

61. *Ibid*, 581.
62. *Ibid*, 483-84.
63. Sarkar writes that Abdus Samad arrived before Hijli in early May (*op. cit.*, 385). *Martin*, II, 483-84.
64. *Martin*, II, 515.
65. Basing on the English sources, Sarkar wrote that on 28th May, Abdus Samad attacked Hijli with 12,000 men and set it on fire. It was he who however asked for peace and on 11th June, the English evacuated Hijli (*op. cit.*, 385). *Martin's Mémoires*, based on the letters from Bengal, is slightly different. Here Martin showed that the English were vanquished and had asked for peace which was accepted by Samad. Martin also praised the humanity of the Mughals, although he hinted that Samad had taken bribes from the English (515-516).
66. For the French interpretation, differing from that of Sarkar, see *Martin*, II, 516. Sarkar wrote that Shaista Khan had issued a letter to the English on 16th August 1687 permitting them to build a fort at Uluberia but withdrew it soon after due to the war on the Bombay coast (*op. cit.*, 385). The anonymous manuscript in the Orme Collection merely stated that by the end of December 1687, the English were permitted to go to Sutanuttee since the Hooghly factory is "ruinous" (in *Old Fort William in Bengal*, ed. C. R. Wilson, London, 1906, 2 Vols., VII. I, 2).
67. *Martin*, 516. Martin's reference to the separation of custom from Faujdar is interesting. There had been a Comptroller of Customs at Hooghly, whom the English had often called Deputy Governor, under the jurisdiction of the Comptroller of Customs at Dacca. Haji Safi Khan was then the Comptroller at Hooghly (Chatterjee, *op. cit.*, 49-50). This must have been his additional job over and above the Dewani of the Suba. It may be that due to the recent English attack on Hooghly, the jurisdiction of authorities had overlapped.
68. *Martin*, 529, 536, 557.
69. Sarkar's reference to Bahadur Khan's Subadarship from July can not be accepted in view of the fact that by April, he had reached the frontier of Bengal (*Martin*, 536). The English reported from Sutanuttee that he had arrived by 27th June (Wilson, *op. cit.*, 2).
70. *Martin*, 558-60.
71. *Ibid*, 561. André Bourreau Deslandes, destined to play a crucial role in the affairs of the French in Bengal, had arrived at Surat by the ship *Vautour* on 16th October 1676. He went again to Malabar and Siam and had returned to Surat on October 15, 1685. In 1688, he was appointed as Director General of Commerce in Bengal. By that time he had married the eldest daughter of Francois Martin (see also "Leaves from Editor's Note Book in *BPP*, 1909, July-Dec., Vol. V, 617). André died in the

West Indies on 13th February 1706, while his wife had died earlier at Chandernagore.

72. After seizing the town of Balasore on 29 November 1688 and committing atrocities on unarmed and helpless men and women, including Christians, the English left for Chittagong on 23 December 1688 (Sarkar, *op. cit.*, 385). Martin wrote that the English pillaged some villages of Chittagong and tried to get the help of the Arakanese, who did not support the English. They then left for Madras (Martin, III, 31-32). Sarkar did not mention the pillage. Martin's story is supported by a document in British Museum (Mss) "Voyage from Bengal to Madras" (see an article "The Adventures of Captain William Health" in *BPP*, 1925, Vol. XXIX, 164-186, particularly 167).
73. Martin, II, 31 & 44.
74. *Ibid*, 46-47.
75. In July 1689, Ibrahim Khan, son of Ali Mardan Khan, was made Subadar. Sarkar gave the amount as two crores of rupees (*op. cit.*, 413). Bahadur Khan left around August 1689 and not in June as stated by Sarkar (391). His tenure would therefore be of 16 months and neither 11 months as stated by Sarkar nor 18 months as stated by Martin.
76. Martin, 60.
77. *Ibid*, 86. On the order of Aurangzeb, Ibrahim Khan wrote to Madras inviting the English to return. By February 1690, peace was finally concluded on the basis of terms of 1651 (Chatterjee, *op. cit.*, 152). It is interesting to note that there is no explanation for the change of heart of the Mughal Emperor. Actually, since October 1688, negotiation was going on between the English (Eyre and Braddell at Dacca) with the Dewan and the Nawab Bahadur Khan for English assistance to the Mughals for their expedition against the Arakanese. By 4 December 1688, the English at Dacca had given a *muchleka* (bond) for transporting Mughal troops to Arakan in exchange of a fortified place in Bengal. Bahadur Khan had granted a *parwana* for freedom of trade at Balassore on the same day which was brought to the English at Balasore on 18th December. For details, *BPP*, 1925, 182-186, in which the bond and the *Parwana* had been given in English translation. This was achieved with the help of a Hindu courtier, Baramal, whom the English had at one time tried to appoint as Faujdar. Therefore, the change of the heart of the Mughal Emperor was not a sudden impulse. The Mughal expedition however did not take place.
78. Wilson, *op. cit.*, 4-5.
79. *Ibid*, 6.
80. *Ibid*, 6-7.
81. *Ibid*, 10-12.

82. *Martin*, 117. Also letter of Martin to the Company, *AN*, C(2)65, ff 32-32V.
83. *Mémoire sur la Compagnie*, f 16v.
84. Letter of Deslandes to the Company, 13 December 1691 in *AN*, C(2)63, ff 203-204.
85. The name Chandernagore was used for the first time in a report by Martin, Pellé and Deslandes dated 21 November 1696 (*AN*, C (2) 64, ff 171-177v). C. Ray's contention that the name first appeared in 1702 is not correct (*op. cit.*, 173).
86. Letter of Deslandes, 13 December 1691, *op. cit.*, f 204.
87. Shett, *op. cit.*, 4.
88. A. H. Dani : *Dacca*, Dacca, 1962, 42.
89. Letter of Deslandes, 1691, *op. cit.*, f 203.
90. *Mémoires sur la Compagnie*, *op. cit.*, f 18.
91. *Ibid*, f 22v.
92. Letter of Deslandes, 1691, *op. cit.*, f 207.
93. *Ibid*, ff 208-208v.
94. *Martin*, III, 168.
95. *Ibid*, 182.
96. *Ibid*, 220-221.
97. *Ibid*, 162-163. The Dewan was asked by the Central Government to raise the amount.
98. *Ibid*, 221. This was the result of a rumour that Aurangzeb had ordered the destruction of the temple of Jagannath at Puri, which later proved to be false.
99. *Ibid*, 250-251.
100. *Ibid*, 271-273. Martin thought that this order was given on the basis of a complaint of the Sultan of Turkey to the Mughal Emperor that the Christians are using this saltpetre to fight against Turkey.
101. *Ibid*, 274. Also see letter of Deslandes to Pilavoine, Hooghly, 5 March 1693 (*AN*, C(2)64, ff 104-104v). Kaepelin is wrong in giving the date of this letter as 20 January (*op. cit.*, 322, fn. 3). Only extracts of this letter are available now. Martin wrongly thought that this was an illegal gratification of the Dewan (201). In the English translation of the Sanad of Ibrahim Khan and Dewan Khayasad Khan dated 26th Jumadi al-awal in the 36th year of the reign of Aurangzeb, the peshkash of Rs. 40,000 to be paid to His Majesty is clearly mentioned against the issue of the firman. This was followed, in the firman, of Muchleka taken by the Dewan Khayasad Khan from Deslandes, in which the mode of payment was discussed. The rate of duties of 3½% to be paid by the French was

also mentioned (*National Archives of India*, New Delhi, Foreign and Political, S 21 January 1774, No. 10, ff 52-68, copies duly attested). Ibrahim Khan had also issued a Parwana soon after, in 1689, on the basis of the firman of Aurangzeb of 1688, by which the French were allowed to build factories only (for the French translation of the firman of 1688 and the Parwana of 1689, see *BN*, N. A. 9353, ff 137-142). Also see Chatterjee (*op. cit.*, 197) although the account is not exactly accurate as it is based on the contemporary accounts of the English merchants and travellers, Thomas Bowrey and William Hedges.

102. A. Ray : "Revolt of Sobha Singh : A Case Study" in *BPP*, July-Dec. 1969, 210-222 and January-June 1970, 58-73.
103. Kaepelin, *op. cit.*, 184-185.
104. *Ibid*, 186.
105. *Ibid*, 188-189.
106. *Ibid*, 191-192.
107. *Ibid*, 193-194.
108. *Ibid*, 206.
109. *Ibid*, 210.
110. Letter of Deslandes, Surat, 20 August 1686 (*AN*, C(2)63, ff 62-64) ; Martin to the Company, Surat 20 April 1686, (*AN*, ff 65-67, C(2)63).
111. Kaepelin, *op. cit.*, 248.
112. *Martin*, 248-249.
113. Pilavoine & Roques, Surat, 15 October 1686 (*AN*, C(2)63, ff 82-83v). The same is repeated in their next letter, dated Surat, 16 November 1686 (*Ibid*, ff 83v-84v). It is interesting to note that the French factors complained to Aurangzeb on the highhandedness of the Mughal Governor Salabat Khan on 24 October 1686 (*Ibid*, ff 86-88). The Governor was replaced in January 1687.
114. F. Martin & J. B. Martin to the Company, 29 November 1687 (*AN*, C(2)63, ff 100-101).
115. Kaepelin, *op. cit.*, 256.
116. Deslandes & Martin to the Company, Pondicherry, 24 September 1687 (*AN*, C(2)63, ff 90-99) and again to the Company on 17 February 1688 (*Ibid*, ff 108-109).
117. Kaepeline, *op. cit.*, 263.
118. See the French translation of the firman of Aurangzeb (copies duly attested) dated 10 June 1687 and the subsequent Parwanas of Subadar Rafil Khan dated 25 June 1688 and 8 July 1688, permitting the French to trade at Masulipatam on the same rights and privileges as enjoyed by the English and the Dutch (*Archives d'Outre Mer*, Aix-en-Provence, France, 5159, No. 3 ; 5162, No. 3 & 4 : no folio marked). But J. B. Martin,

sent to Masulipatam, had already found the factory in a moribund condition and had returned to Pondicherry (Kaepelin, *op. cit.*, 262).

119. Kaepelin, *op. cit.*, 264.
120. *Ibid*, 268.
121. M. Athar Ali : *Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb*, Asia, 1966.
122. See an interesting article by M. L. Raychoudhury "Position of Christians in the Mughal Empire" in *The Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 1941, 5th session, 347-355.
123. Har Narayan was Ijaradar of Malda (*EFI*, 260). Krishna Ram Ray, zamindar of Burdwan was the principal Ijaradar and Chaudhury of the Pargana of Burdwan.
124. Manrique, Calling Dacca a "very wealthy city" in 1640, did not mention any house (*op. cit.*), Nicholas de Graaf, visiting between 1639-1687, mentioned only one good house of the Governor of Muxudabad (*Voyage aux Indes Orientales*, Amsterdam, 1689, 45-46). Only Hooghly had some convenient houses (*Voyage de Gautier Schouten aux Indes Orientales*, Amsterdam, 1707, 2 Vols., Vol. II, 155, visiting between 1658-1665). Tavernier clearly mentioned the houses at Dacca, "inhabited for the most part by the carpenters ... these houses are properly speaking only miserable huts made of bamboo and mud..." (*Travels in India*, London, 1889, Vol. I, 128). Compare the tremendous housing activities at Surat and its suburbs along with the municipal services, (A. Ray : "The Growth of the city of Surat, 1610-1671" in *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh (Humanities)*), Dacca, Vols. XXIV-VI, 1979-81, 95-107.
125. For discussion, see S. Choudhury, *op. cit.*, 242-43.
126. Indrani Ray, in *IESHR*, 54.
127. S. Chaudhury, *op. cit.*, 90-92.
128. I. Ray, *op. cit.*, 51-52.
129. S. Chaudhury, *op. cit.* 98.
130. In 1680, Shaista Khan refused to give Parwana to the English, on the basis of the firman of Aurangzeb, as he thought that it was intended for the Dutch. His Dewan, Rai Nandanlal, pointed out the mistake and he granted the Parwana (*EFI*, III, 231-232).
131. N. A. Siddiqui : "Pulls and Pressures on the Faujdar under the Mughals" in *The Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 1967, Patiala, 243-254.
132. *EFI*, III, 165.

A REWARD THAT WAS NOT : AN ASSESSMENT OF THE ANGLO-NIZAM TREATY OF 1860*

BHARATI RAY

Introduction

Recent studies in modern Indian history emphasize an alignment of the British Raj after 1857 with the landed magnates and the ruling princes in India.¹ The suddenness of the outbreak caught the British people completely unawares, and the realisation dawned on them that the British power in India was not so impregnable. This inevitably led to certain shifts in their policy after the storm had blown over. While in London administrative changes were made—the Crown took over the direct administration of India—here in this country a new system of alliances was evolved. To be sure, in an alien land the Raj needed collaborators for survival. Disenchanted with their sepoys, the British decided to uphold the authority of the traditional ruling elite while maintaining the unquestioned supremacy of the Raj. And so, the alliance with the landed gentry, like the taluqdars of Oudh, as well as with the rulers of the princely states, was consciously and actively pursued.

But did this alignment mean a basic departure from the old British outlook? Did concession to the new allies mean withdrawal or curtailment of British interests in any form? The present paper seeks to examine these questions in the context of Hyderabad, the principal princely state in nineteenth-century India. The focus here is on one particular treaty, the Anglo-Nizam treaty of 1860, which

* I am grateful to Lord Harewood for his kind courtesy in allowing me to use and publish materials from the Canning Papers, which are preserved in the Central Library, Leeds.

1 For general accounts of British policy and attitudes in the post-1857 era see T. R. Metcalf, *Aftermath of Revolt: India, 1857-1870* (Princeton, 1964), *Land, Landlords and the British Raj* (Delhi, 1979); S. Gopal, *British Policy in India, 1858-1905* (Cambridge, 1965); F. G. Hutchins, *The Illusion of Permanence* (Princeton, 1967).

was concluded after the Revolt and was supposed to be a reward to the Nizam for services during 1857-58. An attempt will be made to analyse the real nature of the reward and the character of the interest-groups that the British Government actually sought to serve.

The Context

Hyderabad, the largest princely state² in nineteenth century India, occupied a very central and strategic position in the map of the peninsula. The first to embrace the subsidiary alliance (although never conquered by the British), it maintained a semi-independent existence in name, while in practice, like others of its kind, it was under the full sway of British paramountcy. At the time of the Rising of 1857, the state was ruled by a loyal Nizam, and an even more loyal *diwan*, Salar Jung, who sided with the British. And yet, both the Minister and his master nurtured strong grievances against their allies. To appreciate the nature of their discontent, it is necessary to turn the clock back a little.

By a treaty concluded with the East India Company in 1800, the then Nizam had agreed to help the Company with his troops in times of war.³ Henry Russell (who had come out as Resident in 1811), finding the Nizam's army not up to the British standard, had reformed two of its battalions, which came to be known as the Russell Brigade. They were armed and equipped like the Company's troops and functioned like a part of the Company's army. They were never engaged in the Nizam's service, but were paid for by the Resident at the Nizam's cost. These soon were transformed into an army of formidable dimension, and named the Hyderabad Contingent.⁴ Everything connected with it was organised on a princely

2 It spread over an area of 97,728 square miles (comprising Berar). Without Berar, the area of the state was 82,698 square miles. *Census of India, 1891. His Highness the Nizam's Dominions* (Bombay, 1893), Vol. 23, part I, p. 1.

3 C. U. Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads* (Calcutta, 1909), Vol. 9, pp. 67-73.

4 R. G. Burton, *A History of the Hyderabad Contingent* (Calcutta, 1908), gives a detailed account of the organisation, development and achievements of the Contingent.

scale. Since the Resident sanctioned the appointments, managed the army and sent the bills to the Nizam, there was no effort to reduce the expenses. "The poor Nizzy pays for all" had passed into a proverb those days.⁵ But the Nizam had no means to pay, and his dues constantly fell into arrears. To meet the demands of this army, the Nizam borrowed money from the Company's Government⁶ and his debt to that Government rose to fifty lakhs of rupees during Dalhousie's regime. This was too good an opportunity for Dalhousie to ignore. He decided that the Company should take a part of the Nizam's territory and for this purpose he chose Berar, Raichur and Dharaseo, the richest provinces in the Nizam's dominion. The Governor-General sent the draft of a treaty to Low, the then Resident at Hyderabad, with instructions to negotiate with the Nizam, Nasir-ud-daula, permanent (or failing that, temporary) cession of Berar, Raichur and Dharaseo.⁷ Because of the Nizam's extreme dislike for the words "in perpetuity", Low urged a temporary cession only. "If you say no", Low warned the Nizam, "I shall regret it for your own sake".⁸ Even so, the Nizam was unwilling to conclude the treaty. Then a note from the Assistant Resident informed him that British troops were going to be moved into Hyderabad.⁹ In the face of this threat of military action, the Nizam eventually agreed to sign on the dotted line.

By the Nizam-British treaty of 1853, the Nizam assigned Berar, Raichur and Dharaseo (yielding an annual revenue of fifty lakhs of

5 Anonymous, 'Hyderabad—The Nizam's Contingent', *Calcutta Review* (1849), Vol. 11, p. 175.

6 The Nizam had also borrowed money from messrs. Palmer & Company. J. W. Kayb, *The life and Correspondence of Choules, Lord Metcalfe* (London, 1858), Vol. I, pp. 402-34, describes how the firm was trying to fleece the Nizam and how Metcalfe stopped the 'plunder of Nizam'.

7 Dalhousie's detailed instructions were given to how in a confidential letter. Dalhousie to Low, 17 Feb. 1853, Dalhousie Papers (microfilm copy, National Archives of India), reel 22.

8 Resident to Offg. Foreign Secretary, Govt. of India, 10 May 1853, *P. P. 418 of 1854*, p. 127. The painful story of how the Nizam was bullied and coerced is told in this volume and also in H. G. Briggs, *The Nizam—his History and Relations with the British Government* (London, 1861), Vol. 1.

9 Foot note to para 26, Salar Jung to Resident, 19 Sept. 1872, Foreign Secret Proceedings, Jan. 1874, no. 60.

rupees), to the Company for the maintenance of the Contingent, the payment of 6% interest on his debt of fifty lakhs of rupees due to the Company as well as to meet certain other minor commitments. The Nizam's legal sovereignty over Berar, however, remained unimpaired. An account of the revenue from and expenditure on Berar was to be submitted to the Nizam every year ; any surplus revenue, after meeting the stipulated obligations as well as the cost of administration of Berar, was to be paid to him.¹⁰

The Court of Directors approved of the treaty,¹¹ and Dalhousie was thrilled with his success.¹² That the Nizam had incurred his debt only because of the successive Residents' lavish expenses on the Contingent¹³ or that the Company had no legal right to retain the Contingent¹⁴ were questions that were brushed aside. But then, it was neither the Nizam's debt nor the security for the payment to his army that had really dictated the treaty of 1853. The crucial interest involved in the case was British need for cotton. The cotton textile industry of Lancashire, then Britain's premier industry, depended solely on the United States for its supply of the raw material. To end this excessive dependence, Manchester men looked upon India as a second source of supply.¹⁵ Berar, which produced excellent cotton, was taken to satisfy the cotton magnates. In his

10 C. U. Aitchison, *op. cit.*, pp. 93-97.

11 Letter from Court, 2 Nov. 1853, *P. P. 418 of 1854*, pp. 8-9.

12 "I consider the successful conclusion of this settlement with the Nizam as a feather in my cap." Dalhousie to Low, 30 May 1853, Dalhousie Papers, reel 22.

13 It is significant that as soon as Berar was assigned to the British the annual cost of the Contingent was brought down by several lakhs of rupees. Had this reduction been made at an earlier period, the Nizam would not have been under any debt to the Company in 1853.

14 "If he (the Nizam) were to take his stand upon the Treaty (of 1800)", Dalhousie admitted privately, "I could not argue that either the letter or the spirit of it bound the Nizam to maintain 9000 troops of a peculiar and costly nature in peace, because it bound him to give 15,000 of his troops on the occurrence of war", Dalhousie to Fraser, 16 Sept. 1852, Dalhousie Papers, reel 22.

15 Arthur Silver, *Manchester men and Indian Cotton, 1847-72* (Manchester, 1965), gives an excellent analysis of the motives and attitudes of the people of Manchester and of the nature of the cotton interest groups.

famous Review, Dalhousie boasted that he had secured "the finest cotton tracts in India" and had opened up a channel of supply "to make good a felt deficiency in the staple of one great branch of its (Britain's) manufacturing industry."¹⁶ Once taken, therefore, Berar was not meant to be returned, although the Nizam had been promised that the cession was merely for a time. Dalhousie wrote frankly to Low, "...these districts will never be returned to the Nizam's Government"¹⁷ and we must therefore plan an arrangement on a footing of permanency."¹⁸ That is why he had no scruples about adding the revenue of Berar to the annual income of British India.¹⁹

The loss of Berar was a humiliation that the Hyderabad durbar could never reconcile itself to. Siraj-ul-Mulk, the faithful *diwan* of Hyderabad, could not sustain the shock and died of broken heart a few days after the conclusion of the treaty. The Nizam, at the suggestion of the Resident, appointed Salar Jung, Siraj-ul-Mulk's nephew, as the new *diwan* (1853). This brilliant young man, destined to become the greatest Minister that Hyderabad ever produced,²⁰ started his life as a collaborator of the British and certainly emulated British ideas in order to modernize his state. But in his heart of hearts he was a servant of the Nizam and his principal desire was (as the British were soon to find out, to their great chagrin) to retrieve Berar.²¹

In 1857, Nasir-ud-daula died and was succeeded by Asaf-ud-daula. In the same year the Great Revolt broke out.²² This was a golden

16 Minute of Dalhousie, 28 Feb. 1856, P. P. 245 of 1856, p. 9.

17 Italics mine.

18 Dalhousie to Low, 30 May 1853, Dalhousie Papers, reel 22.

19 Minute of Dalhousie, 28 Feb. 1856, P. P. 245 of 1856, p. 71.

20 For a contemporary account of the life and work of Salar Jung, see Syed Hosoin Bilgrami, *A Memoir of Sir Salar Jung* (Bombay, 1883).

21 For an account of Salar Jung's repeated attempts to recover Berar, see my article, 'Salar Jung, Berar and the British' *The Calcutta Historical Journal* (1977), Vol. 2, no 1.

22 For the causes and nature of the Rising of 1857, see J. W. Kaye and G. B. Malleon, *History of Indian Mutiny* (London, 1878-80), 3 vols.; S. N. Sen, *Eighteen Fifty-seven* (Delhi, 1957); R. C. Majumdar, *The Sepoy Mutiny and the Revolt of 1857* (Calcutta, 1957); S. B. Chaudhuri, *Civil Rebellion in the Indian Mutinies* (Calcutta, 1957).

opportunity for the Nizam to avenge himself for the humiliation brought upon his father in 1853. "If the Nizam goes", all goes, so telegraphed the worried Governor of Bombay to the Resident at Hyderabad.²³ However the Nizam, though aggrieved, stayed staunchly loyal, under the advice of Salar Jung. The *diwan* must have perceived that the British had a good chance of victory and, in that event, he hoped to get back Berar as a reward for Hyderabad's fidelity during the crucial moments of crisis facing the British Empire in India.

Salar Jung's task was not easy. Contrary to the popular notion that Hyderabad was peaceful during the Revolt, it was, as Resident Davidson reported to Calcutta, "a hot bed of disaffection".²⁴ The people hated the *feringhee* infidels : they were furious at the loss of Berar, and unhappy with constant British interference in their administration. Several attempts at rebellion were made, the Raja of Shorapur,²⁵ a vassal of the Nizam, rebelled, and even the Residency was attacked.²⁶ But the rebels were all defeated. The Minister, a collaborator of the Raj at the time, kept the Rising firmly under control in his state.

A New System of Alliances

The Great Revolt demonstrated that the sepoys on whom the Company had so long depended for support in India were not as loyal as had been believed. On the contrary, the princes whom they

23 St. Nihal Singh, *The Nizam and the British Empire* (1923), p. 1.

24 Resident to Foreign Secretary, Govt. of India, 19 May 1858, Foreign Political Consultation, 15 April 1859, no. 351.

25 For details, see *The Freedom Struggle in Hyderabad* (Hyderabad, 1956), 2 vols.

26 The state of Shorapur was a tributary of the Nizam. During the minority of Raja Venkalappa Naik, Capt. Meerdows Taylor was appointed his guardian. The Nizam's legal authority remained unimpaired. The Raja became a major in 1853 and joined the Rising of 1857. He was defeated and committed suicide. His principality was immediately confiscated by the East India Company.

27 Hyderabad Residency Records (National Archives of India), Vol. 102, p. 291 ; *Freedom Struggle in Hyderabad*, Vol. 2, p. 34.

had regarded with suspicion, were clearly their chief strength. The Nizam, Sindhia, Holkar and the Punjab chiefs could be depended upon to help the British in similar emergencies, if ever they should arise in the future. It was Canning, the founder of the so-called "Canning system" that lasted until the end of the century, who clearly developed the idea of building up the states as collaborators of the Raj and emphasized the need for "the policy of trust and reliance" on the princes whom the British must "utilise" in the day of need.²⁸ The two fundamentals of the policy were (1) the building of friendship with the princes and (2) the insistence on their subordination and loyalty. How he developed and executed the policy is outside the scope of this paper.²⁹ But the policy of rewarding the loyal princes was certainly a part of the general policy of cultivating their friendship.

Even before the take-over by the Crown in 1858, Vernon Smith, President of the Board of Control, and Ross Mangles, Chairman of the East India Company, had toyed with the idea of rewarding the faithful princes.³⁰ But Canning had preferred not to reward anyone upon the first show of goodwill, and had refused to do anything "that could look like a desire to buy them" until the ordeal had fairly passed.³¹ In his view, some accession of territory would generally be the most acceptable reward to the smaller chiefs. To the greater chiefs, however, his recommendation was some relaxation or alteration, which they would welcome, in their treaties with the British. In the process, the British would also derive some advantages. "Many of the treaties are inconvenient to ourselves", Canning explained to Vernon Smith, "and they have been framed at different times, with great inconsistencies ... There is something to amend in almost all of them".³² Canning was thus already thinking of

28 Canning to Wood, 5 May, 13 & 18 June 1860, Canning Papers, Vol. 40.

29 For an assessment of Canning's policy towards the princely states, see M. MacLagan, *Clemency Canning* (London, 1962) and S. Gopal, *op. cit.*

30 Vernon Smith to Canning, 8 Jan. 1858, Canning Papers, Vol. 3; Mangles to Canning, 26 Oct., 25 Nov. and 9 Dec. 1857 and 30 March 1858, *ibid.*, Vol. 4.

31 Canning to Mangles, 22 Oct. and 11 Dec. 1857, *ibid.*, Vol. 31.

32 Canning to Vernon Smith, 20 Feb. 1858, *ibid.*, Vol. 34.

furthering British interests in India, in the process of rewarding the princes.

While discussions were going on between the Governor-General and the Court and Board at home, the India Act of 1858 was passed. And Stanley became the Secretary of State for India. He urged Canning not to be "sparing of rewards, especially in land to those native allies who have really stood by us". This generosity was partly born of a shrewd policy. The princes who stood by the British in their trouble, Stanley explained to Canning, should be dealt with generously, if only to induce others to act likewise.³³ Finally, the chiefs of small states received *jagirs*, houses and additional decorative titles. Of the greater princes, Sindhia's and Holkar's territories were slightly enlarged.³⁴ The question of a reward for the Nizam, however, posed complications.

The Hyderabad Question

Stanley wanted the Government to show its gratitude to the Nizam by some substantial mark of favour. He had already suggested land as the best form of reward and expressed concern about Canning's delay in taking a decision in this matter.³⁵ Although Canning's initial reaction to the idea of giving land to princes like the Nizam had been rather lukewarm, he readily agreed that the restoration of the Assigned Districts to the Nizam was the only reward worth giving him. If this was denied, he commented, there would be nothing left but to reward the Nizam with the present of what he called, "a shipload of truppery-gilded carriages, furniture, arms, horses, etc., buttressed by complimentary letters".³⁶ Stanley

33 Stanley to Canning, 26 July and 2 Aug. 1859, *ibid.*, Vol. 6. It is interesting that the same view was expressed by Vernon Smith (now out of office, but still powerful). He felt that "not only from motives of gratitude, but in order to secure the further well-being and tranquillity of India" some reward should be given to the princes who had supported the British "cause". Speech by V. Smith, 11 Feb. 1859, Hansard, *Debates*.

34 Canning to Wood, 17 Nov. 1859, *ibid.*, Vol. 38.

35 Stanley to Canning, 29 Jan. 1859, *ibid.*, Vol. 6.

36 Canning to Stanley, 30 Nov. 1858 and 29 Jan. 1859, *ibid.*, Vol. 36.

nodded complete agreement. He did not believe native princes valued words or decorations. "What they want is land."³⁷

Of course, the Nizam did want land. His Minister Salar Jung was already in correspondence with his friend Col. J. Oliphant, ex-director of the East India Company, who had been pleading with the home government on the Nizam's behalf for the restoration of the Assigned Districts to him. Oliphant informed Salar Jung that the Nizam and his Minister were certainly to be rewarded for their services during the Rising and that this would be a good opportunity to retrieve the Assigned Districts. He further advised the Minister, "should there be any hesitation in India to do this, stand out manfully and insist upon it and it must be granted on a reference to this country". According to him, there was a growing feeling in England that the annexation of the districts had been an arbitrary exercise of power.³⁸

Unfortunately for the Nizam and Salar Jung a change of ministry took place in Great Britain in June 1859. The Derby Ministry gave way to the second Palmerston Government and Sir Charles Wood took over from Stanley as the Secretary of State for India. This change augured ill for Hyderabad. Oliphant informed Salar Jung on 17 June that the ministry had been overturned since his last letter and that Stanley was no longer head of the India Office. "I will not say", Oliphant warned the Hyderabad minister, "that I think your chance is improved by the change of Ministers". Without a favourable recommendation from Canning there was no hope that the Home Government would step in to interfere in the Nizam's favour.³⁹

Sir Charles Wood and Lancashire Cotton Interests

Oliphant proved right. Wood, the Whig aristocrat, was less sympathetic than the Tory Stanley towards the feelings and aspirations of the Indians. He would be the last person to restore the Assigned Districts to the Nizam, not to speak of interfering on his

37 Stanley to Canning, 10 March 1859, *ibid.*, Vol. 6.

38 Oliphant to Salar Jung, 9 Aug. and 17 Dec. 1858. 17 March, 3 May and 3 June 1859, Salar Jung Papers (State Archives, Andhra Pradesh).

39 Oliphant to Salar Jung, 17 June 1859, *ibid.*

behalf with Canning's plans. It was during his term as the President of the India Board that Dalhousie had taken Berar. At that time Wood had expressed "sorrow" that Dalhousie had not been able to "deal on more comfortable terms". He had complained bitterly against the two obligations imposed by the treaty of 1853—the payment of the Berar surplus and the submission of the Berar accounts to the Nizam. "The only point in your treaty which I doubt about", Wood had written to Dalhousie, "is the accountability to him (the Nizam) and paying over any surplus". Here was the opportunity for Wood to get what he had wanted in 1853.⁴⁰ While rewarding the Nizam for his loyalty, a new treaty could be made with him and the Government of India could get rid of the much-hated provisions of the treaty of 1853.

Wood had another scheme in mind, and to explain this it is necessary to digress a little. The opening of navigation in the upper Godavari had become a much-discussed political issue in England. The correspondence on this subject is voluminous. In spite of all the minute details, the problem was really very simple, viz., the interest of Manchester. As stated earlier, Manchestermen attached great importance to the supply of raw cotton from India as a reserve against too much dependence on American cotton. The Manchester Chamber of Commerce and the Cotton Supply Association (formed in 1857) clamoured for more and more Indian cotton and pressed the Government both in and outside Parliament to procure cotton for them, and for improved communications in India for facilitating the transport of cotton.⁴¹ The cotton people looked to Dharwar and Berar in particular, and believed that cotton from these places could easily be transported to the eastern coast of India through the river Godavari. The Godavari, often described as the "Mississippi of India", flowed for about one hundred miles through the finest cotton fields of India and its course was literally directed along the chief cotton centre of the peninsula to Coringa, a fine port on the eastern coast. The river, however, was not fully navigable, and the opening of the river upto the cotton fields of Berar was not easy. Various

40 Wood to Dalhousie, 19 Aug., 21 Oct. and 24 Nov. 1853, Wood Papers (India Office Library, London), India Board Letter Book 4.

41 See Arthur Silver, *op. cit.*, pp. 58-98.

impediments, like masses of rocks and a succession of waterfalls, obstructed continuous navigation, but Captain Haig claimed in his report that these impediments could be removed or avoided. If three rock barriers in the river were removed, the river would provide an excellent route into Berar and the Central Provinces, the fine cotton of Berar and Nagpur could be brought down to the eastern coast at a reduced cost and the river itself could be better used for irrigation purposes.⁴²

Manchestermen in favour of the project both pressed it upon the Government, and found able advocates of their cause in Parliament. The Earl of Shaftesbury, neatly summarised the arguments of the Mancunians. "If Godavari were opened", he said, "we would not have to beg that from America ... what we may have from our own India."⁴³ It was further argued that the river when opened, would provide a safe, speedy and cheap way of transport not only for cotton, but also for corn, millet, rice and other exportable products and for troops and military stores as well.

Wood, under pressure from the cotton people, had encouraged the survey of the Godavari as early as 1854, when he had been at the head of the India Board.⁴⁴ As the head of the India Office he took up the scheme with vigour. It was, he believed, the duty of the Government to improve the lines of communication. And a navigable channel into the heart of the Deccan, was bound "to bring the Berar cotton cheaply to the coast and would stop the mouth of our Manchester grumblers".⁴⁵ Although Wood later lost patience with Manchestermen for depending too much on the Government—"they are a hopeless set" he grumbled to Denison later in 1861⁴⁶—he nevertheless played up to them. In early 1860 he directed Trevelyan, Governor of Madras, to take the necessary steps for the

42 P.W.D. Despatch, Court of Directors to Governor-in-Council, Madras, no. 8, 29 June 1858.

43 Speech by Earl of Shaftesbury, 1 Aug. 1862, Hansard, *Debates*, Vol. 168.

44 Wood to Dalhousie, 8 Feb. and 10 July 1854 and to Harris, 24 May and 8 June 1854, Wood Papers, India Board Letter Books 4 and 5.

45 Wood to Pottinger, 24 March 1853 and to Harris, 24 July 1854, *ibid.*

46 Wood to Denison, 18 Aug. 1861, *ibid.*, India Office Letter Book 8.

commencement of Godavari works and asked Calcutta "to spare some money" in order to enable Madras to open up the river upto the southern part of the Nizam's cotton-fields.⁴⁷

There were, however, some political difficulties regarding the matter. For about two hundred miles the Godavari ran entirely through the territory of the Nizam, and the first of the three river barriers that had to be removed lay in the Nizam's dominions. "It would be absurd", Wood explained before the Commons, "to commence work in a territory not belonging to the Indian Government."⁴⁸ He decided, therefore, that the British ought to have at least one side of the river in their possession.⁴⁹ Dislodging the state of Hyderabad from one bank of the river was vital for the British for another reason. The Nizam used to levy a 5% duty on all goods in transit on the river. In addition the border zemindars also levied whatever taxes they pleased.⁵⁰ These did not suit the interests of the British traders and manufacturers who, in the middle of the nineteenth century, believed in *laissez faire* economics.⁵¹ There was thus little use in improving river navigation before the removal of the duties.

And so, Wood made up his mind quickly enough. "I mean to do something for the Godavari." He explained his scheme to Trevelyan : "We ought to do two things, (i) to acquire possession by exchange or otherwise of the left bank of the Godavari, (ii) make some arrangements to free the navigation from tolls."⁵² Having given the

47 Wood to Trevelyan, 26 Jan. and 25 May 1860, *ibid* , Letter Book 2.

48 Speech by Wood, 3 Feb. and 9 Aug. 1860, Hansard, *Debates*, Vols. 156 and 160.

49 Wood to Trevelyan, 8 Nov. 1859 and 26 April 1860, Wood Papers, India Office Letter Books 1 and 3.

50 The Government of Madras as early as 1858 had urged the abolition of there duties. Actg. Secretary, Madras Govt. to Resident, 5 Nov. 1858, Foreign Political Proceedings, 14 Jan. 1859, no. 140.

51 They, of course, receded from this principle whenever it suited them. For a fuller discussion, see S. Bhattacharya, '*Laissez Faire* in India,' *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. 2, no. 1.

52 Wood to Trevelyan, 8 Nov. and 10 Dec. 1839, Wood Papers, India office Letter Books 1 and 2.

whole matter some consideration, Wood decided that while rewarding the Nizam for his loyalty, Canning might ask for some concessions as well.⁵³

Canning's Manoeuvres

Canning needed no persuasion. He quite saw Wood's point, i.e. rewarding the Nizam provided a favourable opportunity to make the necessary proposals. Taking his cue from his chief, he decided to combine the "reward" to the Nizam with a fair measure of "bargaining", and hoped to make an arrangement which would be "satisfactory" to Wood⁵⁴.

The occupation of one bank of the Godavari, Canning judged correctly, was not likely to pose too much of a problem. It was what Wood wanted regarding Berar that would be more difficult to accomplish. Although Canning had earlier advocated its restoration to the Nizam, he promptly changed his mind with the coming of Wood to power. He informed Davidson that he had "given up the thought of restoring any portion of the Assigned Districts by way of reward to the Nizam. Shorapur he must have. The rest must be eked out by presents and flummery of one sort or another."⁵⁵

It is not quite clear why Canning made such a *volte-face* on this issue. The only possible explanation seems to be that he had actually never been enthusiastic about the restoration, and had suggested it only to please Stanley. Aware of Wood's views on the subject, he decided to toe the line, with which, probably, he was more in agreement. Once he had made up his mind that he would not restore the Berar districts, it did not take him long to decide what he would do with them. First of all, he must get rid of the rendering of accounts, a clause which he himself disliked in the treaty of 1853. "A more ingenious recipe for keeping up dispute and suspicions with a native government it would be impossible to invent." "How could we ever", he grumbled, "with our eyes open, undertake such an obligation, I do not understand". The treaty, he complained, gave

53 Wood to Canning, 18 Jan., 3 Feb. and 3 April 1860, *ibid*, Letter Books 2 and 3.

54 Canning to Wood, 8 Sept. 1860, Canning Papers, Vol. 40.

55 Canning to Davidson, 30 July 1859, *ibid*., Vol. 61.

the Governor-General all the responsibility of governing the country, but made it impossible to do so creditably without a yearly wrangle of the most undignified kind. In his view, money relations with the native courts were thoroughly ill-advised.⁵⁶

The stipulation in the treaty of 1853 providing for the payment of the Berar surplus to the Nizam had created a definite rift between the two Governments. The Nizam always complained that the British had never paid a rupee of the surplus since 1853,⁵⁷ but Canning felt that the cost of administration in Berar in the last seven years had risen so high that, in spite of increases in revenue, there had been no surplus to be handed over to the Nizam. While the Nizam expected that the cost of administration would not exceed $12\frac{1}{3}\%$ on the gross revenue, the Indian Government found it impossible to secure efficient administration with so little a sum. Canning did not want to force the Nizam to pay more for the administration of Berar than he would have liked to do, but at the same time the prospect of being bound by the limits set by the Nizam was hardly an attractive one. Canning's idea was to retain only so much of Berar as would provide for the payments guaranteed by the treaty of 1853 plus $12\frac{1}{3}\%$ for its administration, which would leave the Government free, once and for all, from all obligations to render accounts and hand over the surplus. The portion of Berar to be retained by the British was to be consolidated by the inclusion of the *Surf-i-Khas* estates, which had been left to the Nizam by the treaty of 1853. Further, Canning wanted to take the Berar districts from the Resident's control and place it under the Chief Commissioner of Nagpur.⁵⁸ This would definitely have been economically advantageous from the British point of view, but the Governor-General failed to see that this would be indistinguishable from annexation, and that the Nizam's consent would be difficult to procure.

56 Canning to Wood, 6 Jan. 1861, *ibid.*, Vol. 42.

57 Salar Jung to Resident, 25 May 1860, Foreign Part A Consultation, Nov. 1860, K. W. Nos. 508-15; *Bombay Telegraph and Courier*, 18 Sept. 1860.

58 Secretary, Govt. of India to Resident, 6 July 1860, Foreign Part A Proceedings, Nov. 1860, no. 500 & Foreign Deputy Secretary to Resident, 5 Sept. 1860, Foreign Part A Consultation, Nov. 1860, no. 514.

Canning's ideas and terms for the new treaty were at first clearly described to Davidson in a demi-official letter from Foreign Office.⁵⁹ Davidson seemed to have been quite shocked on receiving the letter and the draft of agreement from Calcutta. It was obvious, Davidson pointed out, that the terms offered were not only very unfair to the Nizam, but were even harsher than those originally proposed by Dalhousie in 1853 and subsequently rejected by the Nizam. At that time the British had an excuse "to apply the screw"—after all the Nizam was supposed to have been under a debt to them—now they had none, especially as they were talking of rewards.⁶⁰

Canning paid no heed to Davidson's opinion. Instructions were sent to the Resident to conduct negotiations for a new treaty with the Nizam. The Nizam was to cede the lands on the bank of the Godavari, abolish custom duties on the river and dispense with the Berar accounts. The Government of India would give him Shorapur (which had been confiscated by the British due to the Raja's rebellion), cancel his debts and restore to him the districts of Raichur and Dharaseo. It would keep only East and West Berar, amalgamated by the transfer of the *Surf-i-khas* estates and as much adjoining territory as would make up a gross revenue of $32\frac{1}{2}$ lakhs of rupees (to provide for treaty—obligations and cost of administration at $12\frac{1}{2}\%$),⁶¹ less the amount equal to the value of the Godavari districts and the duties levied on the river to be relinquished by the Nizam. Over the Berar districts Canning would have preferred sovereignty,

59 Beadon to Davidson, d.o., 7 May 1860, *ibid.*, K. W. Nos. 508-15. A draft of the agreement was attached to the letter.

60 Davidson to Beadon, d.o., 22 May 1860, *ibid.*

61 Estimate for $32\frac{1}{2}$ lakhs of rupees was as follows :—
Payment provided for under the treaty of 1853—

Contingent	Rs. 26,75,000
Miscellaneous	Rs. 3,75,000
Total	Rs. 30,50,000
Cost of Berar administration	Rs. 4,50,000
	Rs. 35,00,000
Less interest due on the Nizam's loan	Rs. 2,50,000
	Rs. 32,50,000

but Davidson was convinced that the Nizam would never agree. Canning then had to be satisfied with the trust, provided he was at liberty to manage the districts through any agency that he might think best.⁶²

Salar Jung, when approached by Davidson with these proposals, was bitterly disappointed. But knowing himself helpless, he ultimately agreed to hand over the Godavari districts to the British and to abolish the transit duties on the river. The Berar districts could not, however, be managed by the British in any manner they liked. Their administration, the Minister insisted, must continue to rest in the hands of the Resident, and the surplus revenue go to the Nizam. Any other arrangement would virtually imply the making over of Berar to the British.⁶³

Privately, Canning expressed to Wood his great annoyance at the fact that the Nizam was "still stickling for some sort of future accounts and hesitated to assent to our administering the Berars after our own fashion—by which I mean...the attaching to Nagpur." The Governor-General, however, hoped to get the Nizam's consent on both points. He was going to send Davidson a ready-drawn treaty to which the Nizam's assent was to be invited. "It is everything, to strike while the iron is hot, with this man", Canning explained sarcastically, "for his mind is never the same two days together."⁶⁴

With Hyderabad, therefore, Canning adopted a more stubborn attitude than before. He accepted as final and binding the Minister's letter regarding the transfer of the Godavari districts and the abolition of the Godavari customs, but ignoring the Minister's appeal, insisted on placing the Berar districts under the Commissioner of Nagpur for the sake of what he called 'administrative convenience'. He asked the Resident to make a package deal with

62 Foreign Department to Resident. 7 July 1860. Davidson to Foreign Department, telegram and Beadon to Davidson, telegram, 4 Aug. 1860, Foreign Part A Proceedings, Nov. 1860, nos. 500, 504 & 505.

63 Salar Jung to Resident, 11 Aug. 1860 & Resident to Foreign Secretary, 12 Aug. 1860, *P. P. 338 of 1867*, pp. 14 & 18.

64 Canning to Wood, 8 Sept. 1860, Canning Papers, Vol. 40.

the Nizam—the restoration of Raichur and Dharaseo, the cancellation of the debt, the withdrawal of the Nizam's claim for the Berar accounts, and the transfer of the *Surf-i-Khas* estates in Berar to the British. The proposals were either to be accepted or rejected as a whole.⁶⁵ While Salar Jung insisted that the transfer of the Godavari districts was connected with these four proposals, Canning clung determinedly to the view that the present proposals were entirely unconnected with the cession of the Godavari districts to which the Nizam had already absolutely agreed. He hoped His Highness would not recede from this position.⁶⁶

Davidson seems to have been sympathetic to the Nizam's point of view for which he was severely rebuked by his superior. Canning was most annoyed that Davidson had not carried out his instructions properly.⁶⁷ Rather than risk removal from his post, Davidson asked Salar Jung to comply with the Governor-General's views.⁶⁸ The Nizam and his Minister were quite powerless to oppose the purposeful Governor-General. Although the Nizam could not help feeling that he had been hood-winked—had the situation been explained to him he would never have consented to surrender the Godavari districts, he said—he accepted all the four proposals submitted by Canning. He only requested that the Berar surplus, if any, be paid

65 Foreign Deputy Secretary to Resident, 5 Sept. 1860, Foreign Part A Consultation, Nov. 1860, no. 514

66 Davidson to Beadon, telegram, 26 Sept. & Beadon to Davidson, telegram, 29 Sept. 1860, Hyderabad Residency Records, Vol. 102, p. 113(E).

67 Canning to Wood, 4 Nov. 1860, Canning Papers, Vol. 40. Canning severely reprimanded Davidson for his demi-official letter of 26 September 1860 to Beadon. Unfortunately, I have not been able to trace the letter, but Canning quotes Davidson as writing, "I do not think it would show our Government in a good light after the Queen's Proclamation if it could with any truth be said we demanded the entire cession (conceding nominal sovereignty) of districts conferred on His Highness after the last Mahratta War for services done in the rebellion of 1857/58." Canning was understandably furious; he felt that Davidson was accusing the Government of "using trickery." For this "offence" Davidson was "nearly" removed from his post. Canning to Davidson, 24 Nov. 1860, Canning Papers, Vol. 62.

68 Resident to Salar Jung, 30 Sept. 1860, Foreign Part A Proceedings, Nov. 1860, K. W. E. Nos. 516-26.

to him, and the Berar administration be kept in the hands of the Resident and not transferred to those of the Commissioner of Nagpur. This would, at least, ensure public recognition of the fact that Berar belonged to his state.⁶⁹

Canning expressed his satisfaction at the Nizam's acceptance of his conditions, particularly the one regarding the Berar accounts, and agreed to grant him his two requests. The requests were not granted unconditionally. The Nizam was to understand that the Government of India was to be given the widest latitude over the cost of administration of the Berar districts. Moreover, His Highness could not question the administrative charges which were to be defrayed from Berar before any surplus could be earned.⁷⁰ Canning explained to Wood why he had agreed to give up his demand to transfer Berar to the Commissioner of Nagpur. "The Nizam was so sensitive on the point of sovereignty, and showed himself so suspicious of such an arrangement being only a first step towards making the districts red in the map that I did not press it." Canning also wanted to assure the Nizam that the British wished to treat him with generosity and consideration.⁷¹

The Nature of the Reward

The treaty between the Nizam and the Government of India was finally concluded on 7 December, 1860. Shorapur was restored in full sovereignty to the Nizam. His debt of fifty lakhs of rupees was cancelled. The Raichur Doab and the Dharaseo districts were restored to him. The Nizam was to forego all demands for the Berar accounts of the past, present and future, but the India Government was to pay him any surplus that might accrue after defraying the cost of administration, the cost itself being entirely at the discretion of the Government. The Berar districts, together with all *Surf-i-Khas* estates and such additional adjoining districts which would provide

69 Resident to Secretary, Govt. of India, 12 Oct. 1860, Hyderabad Residency Records, Vol. 102, p. 11.

70 Foreign Secretary to Resident, 19 Nov. 1860, Foreign Part A Consultation, Nov. 1860, nos. 525-6.

71 Canning to Wood, 4 Nov. 1860, Canning Papers, Vol. 40.

for an annual gross revenue of 32 lakhs of British India rupees, were to be held by the Government of India for the payment of the Contingent and various other payments provided for by the treaty of 1853. The Nizam gave the British complete control over all his possessions on the left bank of the Godavari and the Wyne-ganga above the confluence of the two rivers. The navigation of the Godavari and its tributaries as far as they formed the boundary between the Nizam's dominions and the British dominions in India was to be free and no customs or other duties were to be levied by either of the parties or by their subjects on goods passing up and down the river.⁷²

Needless to say, the treaty was approved of by Wood, who congratulated Canning and signified Her Majesty's approval of the satisfactory arrangements with the Nizam. These would give the Madras Government necessary command of the Godavari and would "solve many difficulties and please our cotton people". His only regret was the re-transfer of territories, that is, the Raichur and Dharaseo districts, from the British to a native power, and the inability to get the Assigned Districts in full sovereignty.⁷³

Canning, too, was pleased with the treaty, and took it as a personal diplomatic triumph. He felt that these terms could never have been obtained had the British not pressed for concessions while rewarding the Nizam at the same time. In reply to Wood's objection to the handing over of two out of the four Assigned Districts to the Nizam, he requested the Secretary of State "to bear in mind that they were only assigned; that we did not possess them as our own; and that we had administered them for less than six years." However, Canning was a little unhappy that he could not transfer Berar to the Commissioner of Nagpur. For this he laid the blame squarely on Davidson. If Davidson had done his duty, so Canning complained to Wood, the Government of India might have succeeded in administering Berar through the Commissioner of Nagpur. Fortunately, however, the Nizam had agreed to forego all demands for

72 C. U. Aitchison, *op. cit.*, pp. 105-6.

73 Wood to Morehead, 10 Oct. 1860 & to Canning, 18 Oct. 1860, Wood Papers, India Office Letter Books 4 & 5.

accounts and not to question the cost of the Berar administration. Although this was not the same as unconditional possession, because the British themselves could not make any extra profits from the districts, Canning told Wood that they could now govern them with a free hand. Under the treaty of 1853, the Nizam's Government was at liberty to express any dissatisfaction at any "expenditure of administration beyond a certain limited amount", and did, in fact, consider the British expenditure on public works and education unnecessarily large. Henceforward the British were "clear of the obligation ... to justify our ways of government to native *Durbars*."⁷⁴

Indeed, the treaty of 1860 gave the British almost everything they wanted. They had full control over Berar. The Godavari districts had been handed over to them even before the conclusion of the treaty, making possible the unhampered movement of British goods on the river. The new frontier between the two Governments, after transfer, was the Godavari till it reached the confluence of the Wyneganga, the Wyneganga till it reached the confluence of the Pranhita, the Pranhita till its confluence with the Wardha—and afterwards the Wardha. This was a good natural frontier between the Nizam's dominions and the British.⁷⁵

His Highness the Nizam, to "reward" whom the treaty was concluded was, not surprisingly, very dissatisfied with it. He felt that he had been coerced into agreeing to its terms. In fact, the taint of unjustified compulsion, by which the treaty of 1853 had been vitiated, was not effaced by the treaty of 1860. The Nizam's Government, already in possession of the Parliamentary Blue Book on the treaty of 1853, was acutely conscious of the injustice done to it at that time. The Government would not have, under the normal circumstances, consented to any disadvantageous revision of the

74 Canning to Wood, 8 Sept. & 4 Nov. 1860 & 6 Jan. 1861, Canning Papers, Vols. 40 & 42.

75 Resident to Commissioner of Nagpur, 10 Oct. 1860, Hyderabad Residency Records, Vol. 213, p. 259. A. Glasford, Assistant Agent to the Governor-General, took possession of the Godavari districts on behalf of the Government of India and made them over to Nagpur.

treaty.⁷⁶ The Nizam yielded only because he was compelled to do so and was forced to express public satisfaction with it.

This new arrangement gave him nothing that was not his own. The treaty of 1800 had called the Rajah of Shorapur a zemindar and the Nizam's subordinate, so the Nizam's claim to the land was legally more valid than the British claim. He could also refer to the Partition Treaty after the Maratha War of 1818 when the principality had been unreservedly included, after a survey of the frontier (1822), within his boundary. The British had confiscated it only after the Rajah's rebellion in 1857-58, but it was the Nizam who had an undisputed right to Shorapur.⁷⁷

The other reward that the Nizam received was scarcely very rewarding either. He could not possibly accept the cancellation of the debt as a reward, because he had never considered the debt to be due from him at all. It had arisen because of the Contingent, the history of which was only too well-known to him. And he believed that in 1853, as well as after it, the British had no pecuniary claim against him.

The only reward that the Nizam would have appreciated, indeed the only reward he would have accepted as being worthy of the, name, was the restoration of Berar, but evidently that was not to be. Raichur and Dharaseo were restored to him simply because the revenue from Berar had increased and because the *Surf-i-Khas* and other districts had been acquired by the British. Moreover, even in the restored districts the British protected their interests, making Salar Jung promise that all land required for the purpose of the Madras and the Great Indian Peninsular Railways and for the extension of the Madras Irrigation Company would be given to the British, following the return of Raichur.⁷⁸

Happy with his "bargains", Canning now decided to send as "rewards" (as he explained to Wood) presents to the value of one

76 Davidson to Beadon, d. o., 22 May 1860, Foreign Part A Consultation, Nov. 1860, K. W. Nos. 508-15.

77 Salar Jung to Resident, 25 May 1860, *ibid.*

78 Salar Jung to Resident, 13 Aug. 1860, C. U. Aitchison, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

lakh to the Nizam, and small presents to Salar Jung and *Shums-ul-Umra*, the principal nobleman of Hyderabad.⁷⁹ He sent these gifts to the Nizam's court, requesting the Nizam to accept these as tokens of his friendship and expressing the desire of his Government for a "lasting concord" between the two states. In a full durbar Davidson delivered the gifts from the Governor-General to the Nizam and his officers.⁸⁰ If the Nizam expressed pleasure with the gifts, it was but merely affected.

Conclusion

The move made by the Nizam and his Minister to win Berar through the policy of appeasement and loyalty failed completely. Berar remained a bone of contention between them and the British for many years to come.⁸¹

In the final analysis, the treaty of 1860 was scarcely a reward for an ally who had supported the British during their most disturbed moments. It cancelled the Nizam's debts, but then he had considered the debts spurious to begin with, it gave him Shorapur which was always legally his, and it gave him Raichur and Dharaseo but took back the *Surfi-Khas* estates as well as the Godavari districts. All said and done, the Nizam's reward did not come to much more than the compliments, fine words and the "shipload of trumpery" that Canning himself had admitted would be meaningless to the Nizam. It was the British who gained by strengthening their control over Berar, redefining boundaries to their advantage, securing freedom of navigation along the Godavari and land for their canals and railways. Above all, this carefully calculated reward established their supremacy over Hyderabad and gave their paramountcy in the region a very firm foothold.

79 Canning to Wood, 8 Sept. 1860, Canning Papers, Vol. 40.

80 Governor-General's *khureeta* to Nizam, 26 July 1861, Foreign Political A Proceedings, Dec. 1861, no. 60.

81 For a fuller discussion, see my forthcoming publication 'Hyderabad and British Paramountcy, 1858-1883'.



(Continued from page no. 16)

Confucian morality. In a religious tract and a biography of Srikrishna, several essays and three of his last novels, Bankim introduced a new view of Hinduism (which he called *anushilan dharma* or religion of culture), based on a selective combination of traditional values, preached in the *Mahabharata*, the *Gita* and the *Bhagavata Purana* by Srikrishna, born as man but who, by practising the religion of culture, rose to be God Himself. The way of this Indian superman, rather man-God, could furnish India a superior ideological stimulus towards modernisation than any borrowed Western theory of progress could.

Like Nishimura, Bankim had begun as a pioneer of westernization. He acquainted the Indian intelligentsia with ideas of Rousseau, Herder, John Stuart Mill, Auguste Comte' and Herbert Spencer. He wrote *Samya*, modelled on Rousseau and Mill, to undo the basic inequalities of Indian society, split along landlord and peasant, educated and illiterate, dominant male and subservient female. In *Bangadeshiya Krishak* he particularly stressed the plight of the peasantry, and in other essays, the lack of national consciousness and cohesion.

Could such imbalance be removed through westernization? Bankim found no such easy solution, and he knew that much of it was the consequence of western rule. The modern need not be equated with the western, and the western with the Anglo-Saxon. He maintained, like the German romantics, that every civilization possessed a unique character and any attempt to impose a universal mould, so dear to the heart of the age of Enlightenment (and later of imperialism), would wipe out that uniqueness and distort natural growth. He resented Keshub Chandra Sen's and Pratap Majumdar's attempt to build up the image of ethical Christ, embodying the most perfect form of cosmopolitan religion, as much as Sivnath Shastri's acceptance of the social reformist programme of unitarianism. It would be disastrous for India to import the utilitarian, materialist, individualist programme of the West, for it went against the grain of India's spiritual, collectivist, pluralist Hindu culture. He formulated 'good' in ethical rather than in material terms and rejected Bentham's arithmetical yardstick. He substituted for the artificial and

selfish motives to promote human happiness, suggested by Mill, love for fellow men resulting from love of God. Though he believed in here and now, he would not worship at the altar of Adam Smith and Ricardo. He challenged Spencer's crude Social Darwinism, as progress involved substitution of an ethical for a natural process. He used John Stuart Mill's rationalist arguments against Puranic Hinduism with its polytheism and absurd miracles, but he would not accept the Rationalists', the Scientists' or the Philosophers' God, be it Voltaire's Deity, Comté's Humanity or Spencer's Inscrutable Power in Nature. Since Rammohun the Brahmos had insisted on introduction of Christian ethics. Bankim found similar, if not better, ethical ideas in the *Mahabharata* and the *Gita*. He defended image worship to concretize the abstract Monism of the *Upanishads*, since in it the masses got an outlet for emotionalism. For the elite, he introduced *anushilan dharma*, a religion of culture, built around the epic personality of Srikrishna whom he carefully distinguished from the later Vaishnava tradition. Incarnation he reinterpreted as an ascent of man into godhead rather than as descent of God into man. Srikrishna was the Ecce Homo of the Hindus, apotheosis of man through strenuous cultivation and integration of all his faculties and dedication of his full-blown personality to the good of the world. He was not an ascetic like the Buddha or Christ. He belonged to this world and fought its battles as *dharma yuddha*, viz. without being involved, for restoration of a *dharmarajya* viz. a Kingdom of Righteousness.

Bankim's belief in human perfectibility and emphasis on self-improvement betray the influence of Enlightenment as well as Victorianism. There are various strands of thought in Bankim's reconstruction of the superman-God, viz. Mill's ideal of "a being who realises our own best ideas of perfection", Comté's idea of perfect unity where all the constituent parts of a man's nature are made to converge towards one common purpose—viz. good of man, Darwin-Spencer's idea of evolution towards a higher personality. But these had been Indianised. Not only that, the monistic abstraction of *Nirguna Brahman* had been concretized, even historicized, in Srikrishna, without the erotic undertones of later Vaishnavism. His Srikrishna would serve a unique purpose. A soldier, strategist and leader of men, he would build the Indian nation, as he had once

done through the bloody battle of Kurukshetra. This supreme vision of omnipotent unity, vouchsafed to Arjuna in the *XIth* chapter of the Gita, inspired the 19th century Indians, plagued by impotence in the face of the Western challenge.

Yet Srikrishna was not Nietzsche's Superman or Wagner's volk-leader. By definition he was the symbol of reconciliation between individual perfectionism and a higher order. The keyword in Bankim was *Priti*, love for man, from which work for his good would follow. From individual betterment and freedom there was but one step to national betterment and freedom. But Bankim would not stop there. Patriotism was not an end in itself ; it was only a necessary step towards universal love. He neither denied material development nor science and technology to achieve it. Fully aware of the exploitative character of British rule, he advised Satyananda, the leader of the Santana army in *Anandamath*, to lay down arms against them, for they alone could teach Indians the secret of physical/intellectual betterment through science. Science would help the Indian ethos to round up its deficiencies and resume its unfinished quest for perfection. All this, strangely enough, comes at the end of a novel, which with its immortal hymn *Bandemataram* (In praise of Mother), gave the clarion call to militant Indians to a relentless anti-British struggle.

The tragedy of Bankim lies in the fact that where he looked towards the past only to build a better future, to the evolution of fully developed men controlling nature and self for the mankind as a whole, Aurobindo, the leader of the Extremist nationalists, never took his eyes away from the past, denounced the material culture of the West and rejected science which was but its hand maid for exploitation. The West was decadent. The machine was Moloch. Science was Mephistopheles trying to ensnare modern man in his tempting toils. Drawing inspiration only from the Aryan fountain, Aurobindo would stake out for India a messianic role—that of the spiritual saviour of the West. He saw in Vivekananda's triumphal progress in America an earnest of what was to come—the spiritual conquest of the West by India. Such views have affinity with Slavophilism and betray a desperate wish to escape into the womb of the past.¹⁹

The Extremists misinterpreted Vivekananda also, for he was not a one-way missionary. He was offering the West India's spiritual wisdom in return for funds and technical know-how to uplift India. His Master had given him a mission — that of awakening the divinity in man. But during his travels incognito after the Master's death, he found little divinity left in the mutilated and mangled remains of the race which had once been the proud bearer of the Aryan standard. He saw in Indians slaves of a foreign power as much as of their senses, suffering from hunger of the body more keenly than from hunger of the soul. The spectre of empty bellies, emasculated men, degraded women and illiterate children haunted the Advaitin, supposed to be a detached witness of the scene. In his perception, if the West suffered from the excesses of *rajas*, the East suffered from those of *tamas*, and they needed each other to fulfil man's quest for perfection.

He was not only the heir of Ramakrishna but of Rammohun, Vidyasagar and Bankim. He took up the thread of Vedantism where Roy had left it but added to it his Master's realisations that the many and the one are the same Reality perceived by the same mind in different moods, that God may be worshipped as manifest as well as unmanifest, that all religions are rivers converging on the same ocean of unity and that Jiva is Siva, men are not only *from* God but *are* God. He rejected the reformism of Vidyasagar and Brahmo Samaj as disruptive of the social fabric, which has to grow from within. But Vidyasagar's compassion moved him deeply. Bankim's Srikrishna model failed to appeal to the Vedantin but the idea of total development and integration was incorporated in his theory of four Yogas.

In fact, he expanded Ramakrishna's God-in-the-world idea to mean selfless work for world welfare. The modern's concern for *condition humaine* and conscience to do something about it, the Upanishad's idea of *lokasreyas*, the Gita's call for *sarba bhuta hita*, Bankim's emphasis on *priti*, are all writ large in Vivekananda's programme for Ramakrishna Mission which some of his brother monks resisted. Liberation, he argued with them, was also in the realm of *maya*. "If the self was always free, why try to set it free?" And if many and the one are the same, to serve the one in many in

the spirit of sacrifice was to realize Brahman. Such work prepared man for ascent of the spiritual ladder. "Things do not grow better", he said once, "they remain as they were, and *We* grow better, by the changes we make in them."¹⁴

For the first time the Indian monks turned back to pull society upwards. He called them "the sappers and miners of the army of religion". He never allowed them to forget, however, that their best gift to society was to be *dharma*, the consciousness of divinity. While the Extremists heard in his call to awake and arise courage to meet death in a political struggle with the British, they lost his universal message for a much greater struggle each man has to fight within himself. They put politics before spirit and India before the world. They were keener on exposing the ills of the West than on learning from them the secret of material life! To the Vedantin there was neither East nor West, no contradiction between science and religion, but men in different stages of evolution, each needing the other's help. The Extremists moved in a close circle of 'us' and 'them' — us being on the side of *devas* and them on the sides of *asuras*, in an eternal struggle between good and evil.¹⁵

This Manichean hang-over from the Aryan past was as simplistic a dichotomy as the Japanese case of *bun* and *bu*. The proper balance between tradition and modernity had not been found, and the partial suggestions made by the 19th century intellectuals increasingly fell on deaf years. Okakura's visit of 1902 had prepared the ground for Indian admiration for the ebullient, energetic and enterprising Japan fighting the West with its own techniques. Her spectacular victory over Russia in 1904 gave no doubt a tremendous boost to militant ideology in India. But the Western model of capitalism, science, parliamentary democracy and internationalism were rejected in the process. The weapons chosen were, ironically, fashioned in the Western academies. MaxMuller's translation and commentaries on the Vedic texts, followed by works of German and French scholars, revived Aryan memories out of which Dayananda, Tilak and Aurobindo would create myths and symbols of a new kind of struggle. Similarly, Tod's Rajasthan, Grant Duff's history of the Marathas and Cunningham's history of the Sikh religion fed provincial patriotism and set up familiar heroes and cults that could mobilise

masses. Once more India was closing its windows on the outside world, first opened by Rammohun, and brooding on a golden age in the past. The Brahmos were divided into liberal-intellectual and nationalist-emotional groups. Even the poet Tagore fell under its spell for a while and began to worship the wonder that was India and to defend, and even glorify, untenable traditions like caste. We notice in him a tremendous tension between Hindu-oriented nationalism and man-oriented universalism, the product of which are two political novels — *Gora* (1907) and *Ghare Baire* (1915). He was able to break the spell, but an ambivalence towards Westernised modernism persisted in him till the last. He would decry big machines that dwarfed men, condemn any economic system that exploited and reject authoritarianism that negated the individual, who is a spiritual being. Gandhi inherited these ideas and expressed them in *Hind Swaraj* as early as 1909.

No great Indian thinker of the 19th century denied that science and technology provided the best known solution of social problems like poverty, illiteracy and disease. Some were even convinced that religion and science were two sides of the same quest for truth. But they were vaguely aware of the genii in the bottle, that science, if uncontrolled by man, might run amok and destroy what it had helped to create. This paper hints at their cautious search in Indian tradition for some safeguard, some device, which would make science a slave rather than the master. They found that man had something in him — *Atman* — which is immortal and indestructible, which grows and takes on new challenges. Let us hope and pray that their realisation is true, and *Atman* will triumph over atom and ensure that the Black Rain,¹⁶ of which Japan had such tragic taste, will not fall again, anywhere.

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10. জনমানসের দৃষ্টিতে শ্রীমন্তগবদগীতা—জিজ্ঞাসু হরিচরণ ঘোষ	5'00
11. মহাভারত (কবি সঞ্জয় বিরচিত)—ডঃ মনোজকুমার ঘোষ কর্তৃক সম্পাদিত	40'00
12. Poisons & Poisoning (Kshentamony & Nagendralal Memorial Lec.)—by Dr. K. N. Bagchi	7'50
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14. Political History of Ancient India—by Dr. Hemchandra Ray Chaudhuri	50'00
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*26. Calcutta Journal of Political Studies (Half yearly)— Edited by Professor Mohit Bhattacharya	9'00

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